

PLAYING THE CARDS OF TIME



C. DAVID COVENEY B.A.,LL.B.



HMS Press (est. 1983) acquired Atlantic Disk Publishers [ADP] (Atlanta Georgia) in 1994 and in 1995 created its own Imprint: Books On Disk [BOD]. HMS Press ceased its electronic book publishing in 1999. ADP ran out of Stamford Connecticut and BOD ran out of London Ontario. The National Library of Canada requires by law, one copy of any electronic book published for Legal Deposit. All ADP & BOD & EBIP electronic books are being converted from WordPerfect & Text ascii files to PDF files for this purpose. Electronic Books In Print [EBIP] are books produced with the assistance of the London Chapter of the Canadian Poetry Association [CPA] in paperback, chapbook or electronic format.

ALL RIGHTS ARE RETAINED BY THE AUTHOR AND NO PORTION OF THIS MATERIAL SHALL BE COPIED OR TRANSMITTED IN PART OR IN WHOLE VIA ANY MEANS INCLUDING PHOTOCOPIER OR THE INTERNET WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE PUBLISHER EXCEPT FOR SHORT PASSAGES USED IN REVIEWS. PERMISSION IS GIVEN FOR PRINTING FOR PERSONAL USE ONLY SHOULD THE READER DECIDE NOT TO READ THIS BOOK ON THE SCREEN, OR ELECTRONIC BOOK READER DEVICE.

E B I P

HMS Press:
Electronic Books In Print
PO Box 340 Stn. B London Ontario N6A 4W1
@EBooksHMS
<http://hmspress.ca>
hmspublishing@yahoo.ca



“Playing the Cards of Time”: A Synopsis
Original title: The Albino Alligator

by Christopher David Leyshon Coveney B.A.,LL.B.

ISBN 978-1-55253-091-7 PDF

[Editors note: *In converting from Word to WordPerfect some of the coding went ary and text may not appear as it should. Also the author was a fall down drunk alcoholic who fell down the basement stairs of his house at the time it burnt down so he was probably trying to escape and in his stupor, opened the wrong door. This reads like a piece of \$#!+ to me but who knows, someone might like it. Cover photo Creative Commons 3.0*]

This is a cross genre work involving time travel. It is New Age, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Humor, and a thriller, all rolled into one.

The ultra-villainous group known as “The New Gang of Four” are wannabe time saboteurs who have gone back in time from 3033 to the year 1968. Their mission is to alter the course of time, thus creating a very different future. They have hidden in the bodies of members of a professional wrestling troop of the sixties. Pro wrestling, then as now, reflects society as a whole, and so provides a mirror image of that era.

The New Gang of four are an odd lot. There is a Spanish romantic who wants to restore Fascist values, an embittered transsexual, and a would be witch who has fallen in love with twentieth century evil. There is also the mysterious Jo Ho, about whom nothing is known.

Our hero, PALADIN LAMB, is an agent of Canadian Intelligence in the year 2013. He is recruited by SONJA SAVAGE, an agent who has come back from the year 3033 in pursuit of the rebels. She works for the “Natural Intelligence Service” (known as N.I.S., pronounced “NICE”). She has chosen him to help her because he knows the sixties from his own pubescent youth, and, with years of undercover drug work among biker gangs he must be tough. He might be fun to hang with. He has also traveled back in time before, which means he could prove useful. Together, they go in back time. They enter the bodies of two of the wrestlers.

The characters from the future have traveled back in time by a method known as “psychic time travel”. Their spirits possess the bodies of people living in the “target time”, much as a demon - or an angel - might possess someone. Such time travel is not without its risks, including the danger of “flash forwards”. (Acid heads get flash backs, time travelers get flash forwards. Paladin Lamb gets both.)

Paladin and Sonja can recognize each other in the back time, but they do not know which of the other wrestlers’ bodies have been taken over by the New Gang of Four. In trying to find the terrorists from the future, they employ both ordinary observation and advanced psychic skills. They engage in out of body travel and even penetrate the minds and dreams of others.

They discover a conspiracy to kill Senator Robert Kennedy using a programmed “Manchurian candidate” type killer. In fact, other plots to harm the Senator are all around them, drifting by like threatening storm clouds.

One of the wrestlers, Professor Paul, is also a psychologist. He has worked for the CIA as a hypnotist. His periodic drunkenness displays both insight and humor. His misadventures

provide comic relief at times. However, he is still strong enough to have programmed a Manchurian candidate type zombie killer and designed a back - up system that even he can't foil.

Another of the wrestlers, TANYA THE TERRIBLE, a fiery redhead, is a White Russian who claims a connection with the Russian monk Grigory Rasputin, and acts the part. Eventually, she proves more than a match for Professor Paul.

There are other colorful wrestlers in the group. Among the lady wrestlers, LOONEY LEDUC stands out. She is an avid Satanist. There is also LEAPIN' LYNDALIBERTY, a barefoot southern fundamentalist blonde bombshell who whups the devil out of the other gals when she arrives on the scene.

The showmanship of the wrestling, sometimes involving going for real in "shooting matches", enlivens the novel throughout.

Eventually, the two agents do learn the identities of the New Gang of Four, but only after they revive the ancient Native North American use of the dream to aid them. The Spirit Guide Spirit of their dreams is Marilyn Monroe herself.

The plan of the New Gang of Four is to prevent the assassination of Senator Kennedy. This will set off a chain of reactions that will change the future. Kennedy will live, but his dream for America will die.

With heavy hearts, Paladin and Sonja act by influencing the minds and dreams of others to foil the plot of the New Gang of Four. History goes on as it was meant to go on. Kennedy dies and the world of the future is safe.

In the novel we see much of the sixties, through television programs that are watched by the main actors in our drama. The entire novel is heavy on nostalgia.

Chapter One: The Road to Valhalla

“So the new **Gang of Four** really think they can pull this off, eh? It would be the pinnacle of terrorism all right.

Imagine, trying to hijack time itself! Even the Hell’s Angels haven’t tried that yet. This is really one step beyond...”

Paladin Lamb was used to the unusual. He was a government agent, sent back in time to pursue four criminals who had also gone back. “The New Gang of Four” were on a mission that could change the world of the future. It was up to him to stop them.

He shrugged and stepped towards the door to the bar.

Inside, the boys were having a little “pop”.

“Dose bums aint got no class!”

Crew cut Nick Knuckle liked to boast that he always trained on beer and cigars. He took another swig of beer, and rasped in a course voice. “Da buncha red necks! They don’t know it when they see themselves in a mirror.”

Nick was growling in his best tough guy voice, as would befit a top pro-wrestling heel. He was dressed like a working man in blue jeans, work boots, and a red plaid shirt.

Across the table from him, his tag team partner, platinum blonde Professor Paul Pringle, wearing a red dinner jacket, black slacks, and sandals, puffed on a dark burgundy colored pipe. The tobacco smelled of cherries.

Nick laughed coarsely as he lit a cigar. He tried so hard to be tough all the time that, eventually, there was nothing left but the tough guy image. He had become a real hard rock, hard to look at with rocks in the head.

“Yeah, Professor, it’s a laugh how you get them bums goin’ when you wiggle out of them girls’ bathing suits you wear into the ring. Haw! If they only knew you was as straight as me. You better be. If I thought for one minute you really were...Hiya, Cowboy!”

Cowboy Bob sat down beside them and ordered a coke as Nick frowned with disapproval.

The Cowboy was wearing light blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and white cowboy hat and boots to match. His clothing seemed to suit a pro-wrestling “face” of the sixties, a time when you could still tell the good guys from the bad guys. Still, the wrestlers all socialized together when outside the ring.

Unknown to the others, there was a ghost rider inside the cowboy, a Time Traveler from the Future named Paladin Lamb. Paladin had come back to the year 1968 by psychic time travel. That meant that, like some invisible demon, he had to “posses” the body of someone in the back time. He had taken over the body of the professional wrestler known as Cowboy Bob Holiday. Right now, Paladin’s Astral Self just sort of sat inside the primitive brain of Cowboy Bob, ready to take over when needed. Unless there was an emergency that required him to act, he would just let the Cowboy do his own thing. It was safer that way, since each man is accustomed to his own time.

The coke came, along with two great jugs of beer. As usual, the other two would more than make up for the Cowboy’s abstinence this night.

Inside the head of the Cowboy, Paladin Lamb’s spirit form managed a crooked smile as unsettling thoughts drifted across his mind like storm clouds gathering on a hot summer day.

“The ones that I am looking for are hidden here, like sand spiders buried by their traps. When they strike, they will seem to come from nowhere and to vanish with the wind. So I will

have to be ready..."

The Professor said softly: "Daydreaming again, Cowboy? You're doing that more and more lately. Tanya the Terrible is getting worried about you. She says that you are out 'riding on your range' a lot."

Nick's gravel voice growled on:

"Paulie, you're a genius at drawing heat! The fans really got off on that pink number of yours last night. How did you come up with that gimmick of yours with the girls' bathing suits anyway? Now, it's become sort of like your trademark, or something."

"It all began with Gorgeous George. Gorgeous George was my inspiration." The Professor smiled. He prided himself on his knowledge of the rich history of professional wrestling, and he just loved to talk about it. "In his other life, George Waggner, known in the ring as Gorgeous George, was a psychiatrist."

"Just like you are." said the redneck.

"I am a psychologist."

"Same sort of thing, aint it?"

"Well, sort of. Both hypnotize people."

The Professor shrugged, took a deep draught of beer down, and went on with his story: "Gorgeous George was Pro Wrestling's first girlie gay act, with his fancy blonde hairdo and his effeminate affectations. He was only five foot nine, and weighed about two hundred pounds, not big by wrestling standards. But he wrestled big with that gay act of his. Boy, could he draw heat. He always played to big crowds, and he was the star of the show, wherever he went. Not many real broads can say that." The Professor sat back and puffed on his pipe, looking like an armchair philosopher. Smoke swirled around him.

Hey, look... There's Batman coming on that television set." Said Cowboy Bob.

"Batman!" Nick whistled. "Now that is real class. With a BIFF BAM POW, I'll kick your ass. And just look at that Julie Newmar! WHOO! Catwoman!"

"Batman is just like Professional Wrestling," said the Professor.

"Good and evil stand out clearly from one another, and there are lots of colorful villains. Outside of the ring, the villains are often colorless, and blend in blandly with the rest of the world. So, here's a toast to Batman's colorful villains!"

"...and to lots of BIFF! BAM! POW!" added Nick as he stood and swung at the air like a big kid playing. "I just love the part of the show where it gets just like the comics did, an' words come on the TV like "POW! BAM! PLOP!" It really gets the girls goin'! Looney Leduc just gets off on it! I just love hearing her yell out words like BAM and PLOP as she reads 'em off the screen! It proves that gals really do like muscle stuff! It gets 'em all hot an' jumpy!"

"It gets to you, too, my friend." The Professor smiled, smugly. He took a big swig of beer, and went on: "Well, I learned a lot from watching good old Gorgeous George. Then I decided to improve on his act a bit.

Since I am fortunate enough to cut easily, I can give juice without much difficulty. The crowd just loves to see me bleed, and a few tiny scratches with my hidden razor blade will put on quite a show for them.

One night when I was having a beer at the beach, I saw this drunk broad wiggle out of her bathing suit in front of everybody, and get it off with a guy. People all around were laughing and applauding. That was when I got the idea. It was a stroke of genius! I got the big extra large ladies bathing suits, and started wiggling out of them before my matches. Give 'em a little strip tease. Then my act really took off."

The Professor downed the rest of his beer in a gulp.

“Then one day I was watching this movie “Niagara”, and I got a great idea. I added Marilyn Monroe walk to my act. ”

Nick Knuckle laughed: “Har! Har! Dat Marilyn broad really had us guys goin’ in her day! Slobs like us could only look at her an’ dream. But then she went an’ killed herself.”

“Or so they say.” the Professor smiled. “or so they say.”

The Professor poured another beer, and gulped half of it down. Then he went on talking. One somehow got the impression that he was very good at talking, especially when he was also drinking. He leaned in towards Cowboy Bob and spoke in a sinister, nasal voice: “ I’ll bet I could have got to Marilyn Monroe if I had had a chance to hypnotize her. It has worked with others. You know, Bob, with hypnosis you can even convince a woman that she is making love to an angel.”

The comment jarred Paladin Lamb, keeping watch inside the Cowboy, listening, watching, ever the silent ghost rider. What had the Professor learned about “Angelic” sex ? Had Tanya told him something? If so, how much had she told? It was Paladin Lamb who had made “Angelic love” to Tanya, not the Cowboy.

Still, Paladin - and the Cowboy whose body he controlled - kept a poker face.

“Come on.” Nick said. “Let’s shoot some pool, guys.”

The three of them got up and went over to a pool table. Nick set up and the Professor broke. Overhead lighting lit the pool table as if it were a wrestling ring.

Big Hans, the wrestler known across the land as The Black Baron of Germany entered the room. He was tall, bald, dressed all in black. They called him over to join them.

For awhile, the four played in silence. Then the Cowboy missed a shot, only to leave his opponent hooked behind the 8 ball. He stood back and smiled innocently. The next time he shot, he sank a few, then also left the next man hooked, again behind the 8 ball. Once again, he smiled sweetly. He was enjoying this.

“Gotterdammerung !” exclaimed the Baron. “You done hooked me again!”

“ Har Har Har.” said Nick. “Why d’ya think we wanted you to shoot after him? ” He said, pointing to the Cowboy. “He likes to do that sort of thing.”

“He’s been doing this to us all week. Come on. Shoot.” said the Professor.

The Black Baron did, missing badly.

Nick laughed. “ Har. Har. Now lets see what you left me. ”

As Nick lined up his shot, the Baron stood beside him, arms folded.

The Cowboy’s mind wandered as it was want to do at times like this. He thought of his own Welsh and German roots in Pennsylvania. His male friends from his school days had all become coal miners, just like his ancestors. He might have shared their fate, but he had met up with a lady wrestler who liked him and she had got him a job in pro-‘rasslin’. That had saved him from having to “go down the pit.” Coal mining meant long hours of sweat and dust and danger. The only reward for a poor soul would be beer and fights on Saturday nights. He did not want that life.

In his new life as a professional wrestler, the coal miner billed as a Cowboy actually got to travel through the west. Well, he really did dream of having a ranch someday. Then he could be a real cowboy.

Paladin Lamb, the ghost rider inside the Cowboy’s head, hoped the man would realize that dream. A lot of that would depend on the success of Paladin’s mission.

Voices in the bar around him brought him back out of his reverie.

“You are forever the philosopher, are you not, Professor Paul? Just for tonight, let’s forget real life and enjoy a taste of our own Valhalla.”

“Valhalla?” The Professor laughed. “The Wrestling game must have really got to you after all these years, Baron. You’ve forgotten that you come from Minnesota. You are of Swedish stock, not German. You’ve been playing Nazi bad guy too long. You’re starting to believe you really are the character you portray in the ring.”

“So, Hitler wanted to be a Viking. Well, the Swedes were Vikings, too. So the Norse sagas are my myths, too, only I don’t kill nobody. You can like the mythology without being a Nazi. Anyway, here, in this country we have our own way to Valhalla, lit by the neon lights of countless bars. AND... We have our very own Valkyries, too. Here comes one of them now.”

Tanya was stunning in a turquoise minidress with high red riding boots. As she entered the room, her flaming red hair shone in the light like a crown of fire. Her face glowed vibrantly.

“Uh...” stuttered the Cowboy. “I think this is my cue to leave you gentlemen.”

He hung up his stick and went to greet Tanya. They went over to a table in the corner of the room. She ordered a Manhattan. The Cowboy had another coke.

“Still got a ‘headache’, Cowboy?”

“Uh...no.”

“That’s hard to believe. You’ve been getting headaches quite a lot lately, always at bedtime. Listen, just let the good Professor hypnotize you. He will help you to remember how to make Angelic love, the way we did once, so long ago.

Even if you forgot how you did it because we had been drinking too much, the tape was still running in your head. And he can play it back. That night one night with you so long ago, that night of madness... I had a taste of eternity. And I won’t give up on it. I want to know that experience again.”

She was certainly direct. She got out a big fat cigar, licked it all over, sensuously, and bit the end off. Then she lit up, with a look of satisfaction on her face.

After she blew smoke out, she said: “You know, smoking is a great symbol of human triumph. Fire, our greatest enemy, is harnessed at our fingertips, there for our amusement...hahaha.”

Paladin Lamb quickly assumed control of the Cowboy’s body. He had no intention of letting the Professor hypnotize the Cowboy, because it might reveal the presence of Paladin Lamb, the time traveler.

The Cowboy’s voice said: “Tanya, I think that knowledge is coming back to me anyway. I had a dream, and I think I can remember.”

(Of course, Paladin Lamb did know the way to Angelic love, and he was back inside the Cowboy. It was Paladin who had given her that experience on his last Time trip. Cowboy Bob Holiday had never known how to perform Angelic love. When Paladin took over, the Cowboy would black out, so this man of the past would remember nothing that happened. “Angelic Love” is love so good that the woman’s orgasm overflows into the room and the audience shares her experience.)

“Well, I can’t go with you tonight, honey. It isn’t safe by the rhythm method. But I will look forward to being with you next week.” She leaned close to him and whispered: “But honey, if this doesn’t work out, let the good Professor hypnotize you, please. He is one of the top experts. I hear even the CIA use him for special jobs.” She leaned back, and said: “He really is one of the best.”

She sipped her Manhattan, and blew cigar smoke out in a most exotic, feminine way.

“But now I tire, Cowboy. It has been a pleasant evening letting off steam like that in the ring. I

was able to give that witch a little taste of what I'd like to do to you someday for messing up my sex life."

"How did I mess up your sex life?"

"When I met you I was a perfectly happy nymphomaniac. Once I had a taste of Angelic sex with you, I lost interest in anything else. Now, no matter what form of sex I do, my mind still returns to that. I want something more than mere animal pleasures.

Once, for a brief moment, I felt like I was a galaxy of stars, drifting through a universal sea. If only I could remember what you did to me.

Damn it. I was drunk and I can't remember how you did it. I just remember how good it felt. I am going to know that experience again if it kills you." Her voice had become menacing.

"So you shall, my love. So you shall." He said.

"And until I do..." she rose from the table, finishing her drink quickly. "For now, good night." She smiled and slinked out through the back door.

As Tanya left through one door, Sonja Savage entered by another. The slim but muscular blonde woman went straight over to the Cowboy and stood beside his table.

"Where is she?"

"She just left."

"Good. I'll need to talk to you."

The Cowboy noticed that Sonja was still wearing the same green dress and white Go Go boots she had worn earlier that night. By the look on her face, she was very angry.

Once again, Paladin Lamb took over. He recognized his partner from the future, Sonja Savage, of the Green Girlies Anti-terrorism unit.

"Sit down Sonja, I mean, Lady Angel. Boy, she really bruised your face for you."

She sat in silence, composing herself as he ordered a martini for her. He remembered from the history books how in the twentieth century, many felt that the two great pillars of society were the Manhattan and the Martini. She finally broke the silence.

"How can I explain the mess she made of my face? You just don't tell people that someone used your face to mop the floor. They'll think I got drunk, or something."

"Most people won't care so they won't even ask. If they do, just say it was a jealous wife. That will make them shut up, because they will wonder if what you say is true. If it is, it will make them jealous. Hey, you know, that sounds pretty profound. Maybe I have been hanging around the professor too long."

"You have. Partner, you have. Listen, Pal, you've got to help me. Before we leave this time period, I am going to get even with that woman."

She fixed his eyes with her own glaring eyes, green eyes that sparkled like unholy gems, blazing with rage. She leaned close to him:

"If you don't help me, I'll come back to your own era. I'll bring a whole gaggle of Green Girlies with me, and we'll get you good.."

"All right," he said, sympathetically. "I will help. But try to gather yourself together, gal."

The Green Girlies, an order of warrior nuns, were the most fearsome fighters of their age. Or, rather, they would be - about two thousand years into the future. It didn't pay to mess with them. This Green Girlie gulped her martini down and asked him to order her another drink.

Paladin Lamb said a silent prayer. He did tend to pray a bit during the middle of things, something he'd learned to do in his own past as an undercover police officer playing the role of outlaw biker.

“Oh. Lord! What a dilemma! My partner hates my lover.

In order to make “Angelic” love to my lover, I have to really love her, at least at that moment in time. Then I’m gonna have to turn around and really get her, so my partner can get even for what happened tonight.

If I don’t turn against my lover, a whole gaggle of Green Girlies is gonna get me. And the Green girlies are the crack military unit of the year 3030. They’ve got ways to hurt you that haven’t even been invented yet.

That’s just great, God! You’ve really got me shooting from behind the 8-ball now.”

There was a flashing white light, and a booming voice came from above: “Paladin Lamb, my son, when you play pool, you laugh about leaving your opponents hooked, right behind the 8 ball. See how you like it. Hahahahahahahaha!”

“Damn those acid flashbacks. They happen at the most inconvenient times!”

.

Chapter Two: A Strange Hand of Cards

The fight between the two women had occurred earlier that night. Paladin Lamb and his host the Cowboy had both enjoyed watching it. The Cowboy and the Professor had been in the office used by Leo the Promoter when it started.

Leo, blue-jowled as always and dressed in his ever present shabby brown suit, welcomed them to his secret peep show.

“They are just coming in now, boys...”

Leo had secret peepholes cut into the walls of the dressing rooms that were used by the Lady Wrestlers in some of the arenas where he promoted wrestling matches. This was so he could watch his wife, the Lady’s champion fooling around with the other women wrestlers. He had found he liked watching the women in their dressing room, and so did his star male wrestlers.

Leo loved to tell all the world that women were wilder in their dressing room conversations than men were. And he loved hearing girls talk dirty. He had also installed hidden microphones so they could hear the conversations in the ladies dressing room. What a treat!

Leo bent down to use one of the peepholes.

Cowboy Bob Holiday, in his usual plain blue jeans and a white T-shirt, looked across the room at Professor Paul Pringle, nattily attired in a suit that looked like a lush Hawaiian fruit garden at twilight. Paul smiled and winked, and both made a dash for the other peepholes.

The Wandering Spirit of Paladin Lamb was silent inside the Cowboy, a ghost rider unknown to his host but able to take over at any time, like a demon possessing the big muscleman. Only, Paladin Lamb was no demon. He was a Time traveler. From what he now knew about psychic time travel, he wondered how much of human experience that seemed incomprehensible might be explained by postulating such visitors from the future. If he could do it, and he was now doing it, so could others.

Of course such time travel was still very secret, and experimental in the year 2013 CE, the year he’d come back from. Still, he had already made one such time trip, and had saved the world in doing so. Now it was time to see if he could do it again.

In the Cowboy’s body, Paladin Lamb was certainly capable of enjoying everything the Cowboy could enjoy. Things like the sight of women undressing.

The women’s dressing room was dimly lit with pale brown furnishings to match the walls. Two athletic women, both redheads, stood eyeball to eyeball, glaring at each other, hands on hips, like gunfighters about to draw on each other. One wore Go Go boots and a turquoise green minidress. The other, slightly bigger all around, wore a purple turtleneck, black miniskirt, purple pantyhose, and shiny rust red calf-high riding boots. Her dark red lips curled in a viscous sneer.

“You really think you’re hot stuff, don’t you? Where do you get off wearin’ the same outfit as me in the bar last night? And you’re still wearing it tonight. You tryin’ to make fun of me, or something? ”

Breathlessly, Leo whispered: “That Tanya the Terrible is terrific, aint she? She’s as mean as a Rottweiler! ”

“Looks like a shootin’ match shapin’ up for sure.” said the Professor, knowingly nodding his approval.

Leo said: “ Could be some good entertainment tonight, guys. Those wenches’ can really go at it.”

Looking through their peepholes, the men saw and heard as the feud developed.

“ Well, my little doll, **are** you trying to make fun of me?

Wearing my clothes? Well, we’ll just see about that! ”

Tanya reached over and gently took the hair from the other woman’s head, revealing that she was really bald and had been wearing a wig. She fired a big wad of spit into that wig and put it back on the other woman’s head.

“ Well, well, my little girlie, you don’t like that, do you? I’ll see you in the ring in about ten minutes. I’ll teach you to mock me by imitating me, my little ‘Angel’.”

She turned and strutted across the room as the Lady Angel watched, dumbfounded. Then Tanya glanced over her shoulder, smiled, and winked. She said, softly:

“Let’s get changed and settle this in the wrestling ring.”

Back at the peepholes, all three men were getting aroused. Leo the Promoter whistled under his breath:

“Man, that Tanya is terrific. She really likes to hurt people, and the crowd love it. With her every match is a little like a shoot. Like she says, when your feelin’ bad, it always helps to kick someone who is weaker than you are. It’s the Russian way. Like in the good old days when bear baitin’ was their national pastime.”

Now, the Cowboy began to feel woozy, like there was something...some fog, or something, coming over him. He’d felt that way about a half an hour ago, too, sort of out of whack with time. It was hard to describe how it felt. But then the feeling passed. Now it was back again.

Inside the Cowboy’s dizzy head, Paladin Lamb knew exactly what was happening. It was a brief after-shock in the fabric of time that followed his landing back here in 1968. His female partner had come back from even further in the future -- 3033 CE to be exact. That had created a small ripple in time. There was always a danger of an accidental “flash forward”.

Paladin knew the body he now inhabited. It was a good pick. In it, he was tall and well-built, with black hair and blue eyes. He had a craggy rugged face with a dimple on his bluish chin. Yes, in this body, he was a handsome son of a gun if he did say so himself.

No more undercover biker cop beer belly in this body. Paladin Lamb smiled inwardly. It was nice to know that you could do that sort of thing. If you can’t do too much with your own aging body, you can always take over someone else’s body and have fun with it.

As they manned their peepholes to watch the two women undress, Paladin thought about the events that had led him here.

You know, it isn’t every day that you are asked to save the world, even if you are a crack agent for the Canadian Intelligence branch known as CSIS. Even if you had been molded by many years of undercover work among the biker gangs of North America...and had still kept your sanity, this was still a bit, well, different. Even if your flexibility and imagination did make you so perfectly suited to time travel that they

seconded you to an esoteric branch of the CIA, this sort of mission was a bit unusual. Even for Paladin Lamb, it was a bit special. Even though this was not his first time trip, it was still special.

It WAS good to see Tanya again. He remembered their one night of incredible love-making on his last trip back in time. After going 'round the world, they had gone on to do Angelic sex. 'Angelic' sex is sex so **good** that the audience share the woman's orgasm by osmosis. The room is so filled with good vibes overflowing from her pleasure that everyone there gets off.

Making love is so much better when you have an audience. They don't know it, but if you know what you are doing, you can draw on their energy to increase your own orgasm.

Such skills as a lover were a part of the tantric studies that underlay Paladin's paranormal abilities. He had not been born with those skills, he had acquired them through years of study and meditation in the ways of China, India, and Tibet.

Though he was a stranger to these times, he did possess the body of the Cowboy in a very real sense. He could feel all the bodily sensations of his host, the pain, and, of course, the pleasure too. Ah, such pleasures!

The Cowboy stooped again to his peephole. Boy, those gals sure did look good, like the Professor put it, "so good you could eat 'em."

Paladin's partner in time travel was inside the other woman in that dressing room.

The bald Lady Wrestler known as the Lady Angel had the slim graceful figure of a fashion model. Inside the ring, with her bald head, she looked just like a dime store mannequin. That was part of the act.

Well, Sonja Savage always wanted to be slim.

Sonja Savage – Paladin's partner on this mission – had come a long way back from the year 3033 CE. She seems to have stepped right into trouble, big trouble, Tanya the Terrible type trouble.

Tanya slipped smoothly into a Royal Blue one piece bathing suit and pulled on long red wrestling boots to match her dark red hair.

The Lady Angel, looking lost without her wig, wore pink to match her scalp. She also wore pink booties, just to color co-ordinate.

Leo the promoter said: "Now don't they just make a real nice couple." He figured he knew everything about women's wrestling since his wife, Lily Limone, was the ladies' champion. "I'll bet those gals really enjoy all that physical contact in the ring. I know my wife does. She's always better after she's had a little 'rassle with the gals."

Sonja had told Paladin that she had not done well in practical martial arts at military academy. She was here because of her vivid imagination, so crucial in time travel, and her knowledge of history, that could help her to pass in this time period.

Still, she was one of the legendary Green Girlies, the crack female fighting force of the fourth millennia.

In the year 3033, the Green Girlies were the world's elite women. Whenever there was trouble in the world, the press would cry: "Send in the Green Girlies!" Their motto, "together forever" was greatly admired by other armies. No one gave them "lip". They even had a catchy marching song, "The Ballad of the Green Girlies." That was a lot to live up to. This could be an interesting fight.

Mentally, Paladin Lamb went over his briefing for this mission. He had been shown and

had memorized several memoranda that were prepared for Sonja's commanders at N.I.S. (pronounced "NICE"), the Natural Intelligence Service.

First, there was:

MEMORANDUM:

TO: ANGELICA Sonja Savage
FROM: NIS HQ,
New Jerusalem, USA

Nov. 22., 3033 CE

Re: the Last Thousand Years

Information for CSIS Agent Paladin Lamb

Purpose: Motivation. He needs a reason to help us.

The early 2000's began with a great explosion of hope at the turn of the millennium. However, there followed years of great turmoil, during which great swings in climate and civilization occurred. Still, somehow, there was an air of expectation.

At start of the third millennium, America's Biker gangs had been infiltrated by Big Business. That corrupted them. As a result, Big Business actually ruled the world for a brief period. Greed, the god of gamblers, became the god of everyone. No one paid any attention to the pollution that was killing mother earth. Environmentalism was not profitable.

The concentration of wealth in a very few hands led to the rise of a Super Rich elite, who stood above the law of any one country. Sovereign Individuals such as Osama bin Laden could become more powerful than entire countries.

One such Prince of Capitalism proved to be different from the others. He wandered among ordinary people, even among the people of the streets. He learned of poverty and illness. While on the streets, he came under the influence of the New Age Prophet, that's prophet with a "ph" not an "f". That is what saved the world.

Together the two men established a New Order, one dedicated to changing the world. They called themselves, with characteristic simplicity, "the New Way." "The New Way" began to adopt new ways, at first just among themselves. Through the Internet, they lived together, even though they might be many miles apart. They became like unto a great international Co-ed Shaolin Monastery, embodying the noble warrior traditions of many lands. Even though they lived in the world of men, the New Way were apart from it, like a new life form evolving. The initiates of the New Order stood aside and watched as the world sank into chaos, waiting for the right time to take over.

Because of the great disparity that developed between the rich and the poor, civil wars raged throughout the world. Seemingly unlikely alliances were formed. Such groups as the "right to bear arms" type militia became allied with various green communes and renegade biker gangs.

Computers actually proved to be more effective than guns as weapons, when you knew how to use them. By the clever use of computer technology, the enemy's military might could be subtly turned against him. Armageddon was in everyone's living room.

Strange events took place around the world. Almost everywhere, the established order of things was challenged and changed.

Finally, the chickens really came home to roost. For years, the wealthy had grown richer, hiding behind barred windows and selective television viewing. Society's worst nightmares were simply warehoused until the warehouses themselves finally overflowed and all hell broke loose.

This "third force" caught everybody by surprise. Some of those embittered men and women had learned computers while in prison. Having nothing else to do, they became rather good at computer war games, so they were practiced and ready for the real thing.

Then came the germ warfare.

When at last the dust of battle cleared, there was peace on earth. The New Order rose. It was like another Genesis, as if a new race walked the earth.

It was as if the world had been pregnant, and going through birthing pains. Only from the perspective of later generations could one see that Mother Earth's system had been shocked by the trauma of pollution, and that she had responded by fast-tracking the evolution of her life forms. Somehow, it worked. The Earth survived. Most old fashioned human institutions did not.

The upshot is that we no longer pollute for profit, we conserve for the Prophet.

This world is now threatened by four renegades who have gone back in time. Their aim is to change the course of history, and prevent the New Age Prophet from emerging..

YOUR ASSIGNMENT, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT, IS TO AID OUR AGENT SONJA SAVAGE IN PREVENTING THEM FROM CHANGING TIME SO AS TO STOP THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW AGE PROPHET.

We know that the four WOULD BE Time saboteurs have gone back in time. Those four have already entered the bodies of four members of a twentieth century professional wrestling troop. We do not know which of the wrestlers are so possessed. On another mission to the past, Paladin Lamb, you entered the body of one of those wrestlers yourself and so you will be in familiar territory. That is why we need you.

It will be up to you and your partner, Agent Sonja Savage, to figure out which four wrestlers' bodies are hosts to the other time travelers. You will then have to take such actions as seem appropriate.

We do know that the Time saboteurs have gone back to 1968. Apparently, something happened in 1968 that influenced the New Age Prophet profoundly. If that event is changed, the New Age Prophet might never emerge, and history will take a different course. The Living Mother Earth herself may very well die from pollution, as she very nearly did.

END OF MEMO

OF COURSE HE CHOSE TO ACCEPT THE MISSION.

The next memo he had read concerned "the New Gang of Four. "

In the year 3000 CE there were still a few left-brain fanatics who wanted to return to the old world with its obsession for legalistic order and the dramatic potential of its violence. Most felt they would grow out of such silly ideas. Some did not do so.

Most such freedom hating misfits contented themselves with living in cyberspace. Again, a few did not. These men and women wanted to force others to return to the past

with them, to a golden age that never really existed outside of their own imaginations. Foremost among these were the group that called themselves “the **New Gang of Four.**”

The New Intelligence Service, NIS (pronounced “NICE”) had prepared material on this dangerous group of social renegades. Paladin Lamb had also read this.

“THE NEW GANG OF FOUR

The **New Gang of Four** sought to go back in time to change the way the world itself had developed. They could have great effect if they struck in the right place, and at the right time. It takes far less force to change the course of a stream than it does to dam a river. On reading this, Paladin had remembered that there is an old Ninja saying that an ounce of pressure in the right place can topple a mountain. The key thing is to find the right place. Using computer technology and doing their best to obliterate their trail as they went, this group believed that they had found that pressure point on the body of time. They had gone back in time to attack it.

Their Time travel was not a bodily return to the past. Such time travel, based on the model used first in the Philadelphia experiment of World War II vintage, was possible in the year 3000 CE. All you needed was to go into outer space first, so you could be sure that you would not materialize inside a bulkhead, or something. The real problem with such Time travel was that by the year 3000 CE, harmful bodily parasites were almost unknown. Going back physically to any year before about 2500 CE meant running the risk of bringing such parasites back with you. You could become infected yourself with any of a cornucopia of bugs, worms, and other things. Lord knows, the people of the late twentieth century were “coarse feeders”.

Even in the year 3033 CE, suitable spaceships were hard to come by, even for evil geniuses like **the New Gang of Four.**

The upshot of all that is that **the New Gang of Four** went back to the earliest mode of time travel, one that had been discovered, oddly enough, around the turn of the millennia, shortly after the year 2000 CE. This simply involved the transfer of psychic energy.

In effect, your mind left your body and entered a dimension where there was no time. In this dimension, you traveled back in time, like someone walking along the shelves of a video store. When you found the right time tape, you opened it and entered the mind of someone living in that era. You then sort of possessed that person, like a ghost rider in their mind. You could take over and control them, or you could just passively observe them, ready to take control anytime you wanted to do so.

This was also the way that Paladin Lamb and Sonja Savage had traveled back in time. In their case, they could have used the spaceship route, but not without risking a revival of old time diseases. So it was that they also used the old fashioned means of time travel.

They knew each other’s identity in the back time. They didn’t know which bodies were controlled by **the New Gang of Four.** They would have to figure that out as they went along.

They were given profiles of these desperadoes, in case such information might prove helpful in finding them in their new identities. Surely, the desperadoes would try to choose a host body that they would be comfortable with.

Angel de Vladd (a.k.a. Bad Boy Vladd) believed himself to be the re-

incarnation of a twentieth century super-spy from the thrilling days of World War II. Back then, he had been a Spaniard, a part of General Franco's Falange movement. He had dreamed of restoring the past glory of Spain, including her possessions in the New world. He had dabbled in black magic and dreamed of the rise of an Aryan Messiah. He became a devoted follower of Adolf Hitler. He came to believe that some day the world would be ruled by a race of Supermen. Now he was part of such a race. The only problem is, the other members of that race did not want to rule anyone. Angel saw his contemporaries as being so many sheep.

The second member of **the New Gang of Four** was **Devi Llina**. A wannabe witch, she was fascinated with twentieth century evil. She dreamed of demons and sabbats and unholy kisses and the like. Unfortunately for her, by the year 3000 CE, there were no demons left on each to cavort with. When told of that, Devi's response had been to shrug and say: "How boring". She had a way with words.

To the people of the year 3000 CE, **Anastasia Fast** needed no introduction. S?He was a famous dancer, an entertainer who had revived the legendary Marilyn Monroe walk of the twentieth century. In his/her time "the walk" was just as controversial as the original had been in its day. You see, **Anastasia Fast** was a transgendered person, a woman trapped by an accident of birth in a man's body.

Anastasia really had two personalities, and **both** were feminine. Sometimes s/he was tough and hard, like **Wonder Woman**, the red booted heroine of classic comic literature. Other times, s/he was as silky soft as **Sulka**, the purple clad transsexual sensation of the twentieth century.

Because of her dual personality, the medical authorities decided that Anastasia was too unstable to have a sex-change operation. She swore that she'd get even for receiving what she called a life sentence in hell. Now she had the chance to get her revenge.

The fourth and final member was **Jo Ho**. Little was known about **Jo Ho**, not even that person's gender. But it was known that the gang had a fourth member, one who preferred to remain in the shadows.

Another memo was given to Palladin:

The Landing Zone : 1968

The year 1968 was once described as a "crack in time". So it was. In that year, a wave of Revolution rolled around the world. Radicals like Danny the Red in France or the Chicago Eight in America had their brief moment of glory. With the Vietnam War, Imperial Amerika lost her innocence. With the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy, America's nobler dreams seemed to fade. With the U.S. election came the political rebirth of Richard Nixon, remembered in history as the one who went to China.

So much had happened that year! There are so many points at which history might have been altered, so many points at which the terrorists might strike. What event in that year would they try to change so that things would be very different in the year 3000 CE?

Authorities in the Third millennium believed that the gang had found the "bridge" in time by making contact with one of Anastasia's Fast's previous incarnations. That had created their "landing zone" in the back time. The others had traveled back using that bridge. Finally, Anastasia had gone back, closing the "door" in time behind her.

These time travelers were content that this was to be a one way mission. Back in the year 3033, their bodies remained as catatonic shells, mute testimony to their determination.

The group had “landed” amongst a troop of professional wrestlers. That much the authorities in the future did know. That could give the time saboteurs a good cover for all sorts of things. Wrestlers traveled a lot and could go about without raising suspicion.

In 1968, Professional Wrestling was a mirror image of American society, reflecting its values and ideals. This wrestling organization was no exception. Its members represented a cross-section of society itself.

Paladin Lamb had also read the biographies of the wrestlers of this era, bios also prepared by NIS (pronounced NICE) for his briefing. There might be some reason for the choice that each of the gang made in deciding which body to take over. Factors in their choice could include familiarity, wish fulfillment, or ability to carry out their mission.

The wrestlers he would be working with were an interesting and colorful group.

Undoubtedly, the stars of the troop were the bad guys that held the tag team championship belts.

Crewcut Nick Knuckle was type cast as a red neck muscle head bully. He was a former NFL Lineman, and looked the part. His gravel growl had become a trademark as he bragged about training on cigars and beer.

His tag team partner was Professor Paul Pringle. Professor Paul prided himself on being “the epitome of style”. He was a pale skinned giant with broad shoulders, an even broader girth, and platinum blonde hair. Before each of his matches, he wiggled out of a ladies bathing suit while the homophobic fans just went nuts. He was known as a “bleeder” because he cut easily, and the fans just loved to see his blood flow.

Another top bad guy was Hans Von Hauptman, known as “the Black Baron of Germany”. In real life, he was a Swede from Minnesota named Arnie. Tall, bald, wearing a Prussian mustache, Herr Hans was best known for goose-stepping around the ring in his high shiny black boots. By 1968, his old Nazi act had worn so thin that at times he was even used as a good guy, riding boots and all. Aging, he still cut an imposing figure. He had a scar on his cheek that he said was a dueling scar. Actually, an ex-girlfriend had raged at him with a knife because he couldn’t get it up, but the dueling scar story sounded better.

There was also Killer Karl Kool, almost seven feet tall, gaunt as a ghost, as cold as a schizoid killer, hence his nickname. He had once severed the ear of an opponent during a rigged match in order to enhance his cruel image. It had cost \$5000 to get the opponent to agree to lose an ear, but it worked. His reputation as a cold blooded “killer” was assured from then on. He was as feared and hated as the grave.

The make up of the wrestling troop was always in a state of flux, like the times, it was a-changin’.

Most of the “good guys” were not as colorful. One exception was Starway Moon, a ballet dancer turned wrestler. Smaller than the others, this thin Tinkerbelle of a man would pirouette around the ring on ballet slippers, daring the larger men to catch him. Before his matches, he threw out tiny souvenir ballet slippers to the crowd, who loved him.

Other good guys included Big Bill Potts, Plain Pat Dunn, and Johnny Smith, all

three with ring personas as bland as a Republican cloth coat. That blandness was itself intentional, to act as a better contrast to the bad guys and to give the audience someone to identify with.

The women were always there to grace the undercard.

The top lady heel was Lily Limone, the wife of the promoter. She was a beautiful brunette who always went barefoot into the ring to show off the nice pedicure she always had. She prided herself on making her own ring outfits and on never wearing the same suit twice in the same arena. She was the ladies' champion. She always won. Her husband wrote the script.

The host for Sonja Savage was the Lady Angel, a strange bald ascetic woman addicted to reading Tarot cards. While reading the tarot, she placed herself "open" and therefore became a good target to be possessed by demons, or by any psychic time travelers that happened by. Since Sonja also like reading the Tarot, she would enjoy playing this character more than other roles that were available.

The other girl wrestlers were an odd lot. Among them were such stars as Nice Nelly Nebraska and Debbie D. Belle, the wrestling brain surgeon. And, of course, there was the fiery redhead known as Tanya the Terrible.

Also part of the troop, though she was absent, having gone on a tour of Japan, was America's sweetheart, Leapin' Lynda Liberty. She was Cowboy Bob's regular gal. Leapin' Lynda, the barefoot contessa, was expected back in about a month from the time that Paladin entered 1968. When she caught Tanya with her Cowboy, there would no doubt be fireworks aplenty.

Wow! When Paladin read that, he realized that he was going to be steeping right into a romantic triangle with the explosive potential of an Atom Bomb.

The memo's mention of Tanya the Terrible seemed so dry, so, well, clinical.

In his mind, Paladin Lamb saw the three memos become a hand of playing cards, fanned out as if he were playing Blackjack. He could even make out a Heart, a Diamond, and a Spade, but he could not read any numbers. They were too blurry. He tried to focus on them...

He thought: "So this is the hand Fate has dealt me for this round, eh? "

He often waxed philosophically like that.

In his mind, he heard the popular song of the day, "House of the Rising Sun."

BANG !

An acute attack of reality snapped him out of his reverie.

Leo slapped him on the back and said: "Wake up, beautiful dreamer boy! The Shootin' match is startin' up! "

Tanya had once before been Paladin's lover. His partner now inhabited the body of the Angelic one. It would be an interesting "shootin'" match. To the uninitiated, a shootin' match is one where the wrestlers go at each other for real, usually because of some grudge.

Paladin could not help but think that it is one of the ultimate male fantasies: to see your lover fight your partner while you watch. This time trip was already turning out REAL good.

It was quite a sight in the middle of the ring. The Lady Angel, wrapped in a white robe, and Tanya the Terrible, wrapped in purple, stood in their most severe gunfighter poses, glaring at each other.

“HOT DAWG!” The cowboy muttered under his breath. They were about to see an exhibition of the greatest sport of earth, gal ‘rasslin’. At least, it was the greatest according to the gal ‘rasslers he knew, an’ they wouldn’t josh HIM. After all, he was Tanya’s hunk. At least while Leapin’ Lynda Liberty was ‘rasslin’ in Japan. When she got back, he’d be Leapin’ Lynda Liberty’s hunk again. Anyways, he belonged to a gal ‘rassler.

“SHEH - Zee-Am!” Now the screams from the ring were gonna be for real!

Paladin Lamb basically agreed with the thought - stream of his host, the Cowboy, though he wouldn’t put it quite that way. Well, what the heck. “ SHEH-Zee-Am ! ”

Paladin had wondered whether a psychic Time traveler such as he was would eventually take on some of the characteristics of his host. If he stayed in this body long enough, he could wind up becoming a lot like Cowboy Bob.

The male wrestlers stood in an entranceway that gave them a clear view of the ring. Bright lights shone over the ring like the lighting in a bar over a pool table. Blue smoke hung from the rafters of the room, and the smell of stale tobacco filled the place.

As she was introduced, a chorus of BOOS greeted the Lady Angel. There were cries of “FREAK!” and “EGGHEAD!” You’d almost think it was a Republican rally!

The Lady Angel opened her robes and spread her arms wide. For a few seconds, her pink bathing suit made her look naked, and that brought a gasp or two, then nervous laughter.

The crowd cheered as Tanya the Terrible was introduced. She tossed her shock of dark red hair back, like a horse rearing, tossing its mane to the wind. She had a lot of animal magnetism, and knew how to display it.

The referee was a former wrestler himself, a recovering alcoholic with a heart problem who could use a few bucks. He’d been told that it was going to be a shooting match, so he’d be careful not to interfere. The fight had to go to a submission.

The bell rang, and the two lithe figures sprang into action. At first, they seemed to spar with one another, like two Praying Mantis mating. Then Tanya gained a headlock and the Lady Angel slipped out of it. Tanya tried another headlock with the same result. The lucky Lady Angel had no hair for Tanya to hold onto to keep her in the headlock. Frustrated, Tanya yelled something about the Lady Angel having a greasy skull. That brought a few chuckles from the fans.

Suddenly, Tanya lashed out with a powerful kick to the Lady Angel’s crotch. The bald girl bent over, breathless. Tanya stuffed her opponent’s shiny head between her legs and then drove it into the ring with a piledriver. The “piledriver” is usually a finishing maneuver, to be followed by pinning your opponent. However, here Tanya was using it to soften her opponent up so she could inflict more punishment on her. She didn’t even try for a pin. She let the Lady Angel get up on to her elbows and her knees, then booted her in the head. The bald wrestler fell forward on her belly, to the great amusement of the crowd.

Next, she caught hold of the Lady Angel’s legs and bent one of them over the other. A smile slashed across Tanya the Terrible’s face and her eyes lit up. Now the fun could really start.

There was a loud scream as the redhead increased the pressure on the leg lock. The audience roared with laughter. In the background sat a one-legged man, his crutches beside him. His voice boomed out: “Break it off. Break it off.”

Professor Paul Pringle stood beside the Cowboy, also watching the match. He nudged the Cowboy, and commented in a calm and nasal voice: "There is so much sickness in the crowds at these things, it sometimes makes me sad. But such is life."

"Break it off!" The crippled man continued, as if someone else's misfortune could replace his own.

Playing cat and mouse, Tanya let the now tearful girl crawl on her belly across the ring while toying with the leglock, turning the pressure on and off. When the hapless lass at last had reached the ring ropes, the referee had to break the hold.

Tanya smiled as she stepped back. Her face was lit with a healthy wholesome glow. With an innocent look like that on her face, she could have been a girl guide selling cookies. But this night, she had other things to dish out.

The Lady Angel stood, wobbly, and staggered, jabberwocky, all around the ring. Someone yelled: "You drunk or something, lady?" Others laughed.

Next, the Terrible One floored her foe with a viscous elbow over the top of her head. The Lady Angel did another belly flop.

Tanya stood behind her and quickly grabbed her opponent's arms and pulled them straight out behind her. She placed her big red boot roughly across the back of the bald girl's neck, and roughly rubbed her face into the mat. Pink booties kicked in the air and pounded on the canvas, and there were audible sobs and gasps as Tanya slowly used the bald girl's face to mop up the ring.

Some of the audience began to feel funny as they began to realize that something different was happening in the ring.

And all of a sudden, Tanya stood back from her fallen foe. She let the grateful girl get up. She held her hand out, to shake hands, as if to make up. Then she turned a handshake into a wrist lock and a trip. Down went the Lady Angel once again, this time on her back. Tanya pounced on her and began to claw at the lower part of her stomach. Paladin thought her grip looked a bit "below the belt", but the referee did nothing.

Tanya claimed that her stomach claw hold had been passed down through her White Russian family from Jack the Ripper, who had been a Tsarist agent. But then again, she also claimed to have a connection with Rasputin, the Russian prophet who had held the Tsarina in sway. You never knew what sort of outlandish tale she'd come up with next. But it was evident that this particular hold was having quite an effect. The Lady Angel's face went white as paper, and her screams turned into gasps.

All the while, Tanya's face just glowed with the sweet innocence of an angel in a pastel painting placed in a child's churchbook.

The referee leaned close. The Lady angel screamed: "Can I give up yet? Ohhhh...Please. This hurts. I wanna give up..."

The bell rang, and the match was over. The good girl Tanya raised her arms high in victory as the crowd cheered on. She slowly, sensually, danced from the ring.

The Lady Angel lay groveling on the mat, holding her stomach in pain. Real tears flowed down her cheeks. Slowly, she stood and staggered from the ring.

Chapter Three : “Night Scenes”

It was now the night after the morning after the great girls’ shooting match. Sonja had spent most of the day in bed, recovering. Of course, everyone had been talking about what had happened. When she did venture out for a walk in the park, this time wearing a blonde wig, Paladin took over the Cowboy’s body and went with her.

As he walked Sonja back to their hotel, Paladin Lamb the Cowboy glanced at the cluttered streets. He saw old newspapers blowing about and faded posters on the walls of buildings. They provided random signs of the times, giving a sort of silent background report to the sensitive observer.

He heard some music wafting across the hot summer night from a radio somewhere. Something about the Games People Play. He said to Sonja: “Looks like we are going to be playing some real interesting games.”

“Right on.”

“I see you’re getting the idiom of the day down pat.”

“Ancient Herstory is my specialty, remember?”

“I lived in these days. When I was just a kid. It feels funny to think that someday, all this will be ‘Ancient Herstory’.”

A photo from one poster caught Paladin’s attention: it showed a young girl, obviously a flower child, handing a rose to a big, burly cop with a scowl on his face and a tear running down his cheek. It reminded him of his years of undercover work in his own times, living among the various biker gangs who later took over the drug trade. He had seen such damage done by drugs. But in these times, there was a sweet innocence to it all, a spirit that reminded him of what he’d read of early Christianity. There was none of the greed that would grow so great in America later in the century.

Paladin could not help but identify with the cop. Many people in authority have been torn between their duty and their heart. He thought of some classic movie or other that showed a Roman Centurian among the early Christians. But these right wing extremists they were dealing with now were certainly no early Christians. They didn’t even slightly resemble the people of the fish. Still, there was something awfully fishy about them.

From somewhere the sweet smell of incense wafted into the light summer breeze. Exotic music came from nowhere. They turned a corner and saw several saffron robed figures dancing, wearing some exotic war paint.

“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna...”

Behind them was a pawn shop, closed for the night, its windows, barred. In fact, all the buildings in the area had bars, as if they were some strange kind of prison.

“Hare Rama, Hare Rama...”

Paladin wondered if the words should not be: “Hare Shiva, Hare Shiva...” So many people here seemed to worship destruction. Sometimes a society needs a God of Destruction to cleanse it. Still, the incense did smell good, and it brought back nice memories. But all that was just smoke.

A photo in an old newspaper blowing in the breeze caught his eye. He caught it, and read it. In Vancouver Canada, authorities were hosing the hippies down. The hippies were dancing in the water, looking like children playing in the stream from a fire-hydrant. It was the summer of 1968, and the sunlit world of youth seemed to smile, even in the

midst of garbage.

Sonja stopped and pointed to an old poster on a telephone. It advertised a magazine with a photo of Dr. Timothy Leary on the cover. She sighed and said:

“‘Turn on. Tune in. Drop out.’ In later years, the New Age Prophet will advocate a drugless version of much the same idea, and it will change America forever.”

“As Lao Tse once did in ancient China.” said Paladin, reflecting his martial arts background. “Even as Lao Tse once did.”

“But they would still come to call it the New Age.”

Having got the last word in, she walked ahead. Paladin could not help but notice how the curves of her grass green dress rolled gently, like the greens on a golf course.

At last, they came to their hotel. The Wolverine hotel was a gigantic gray building, rising like a big block of stone from the smaller buildings and parking lots all around it. They entered the hotel lobby and walked past fountains on the lobby that glowed with purple and red light. They entered an elevator with faded tan suede upholstery that had once been stylish. The Wolf’s Den hotel had indeed seen better days. Still, it was cheap, and the wrestlers always stayed there when they were in this town.

Paladin said softly to her: “Come into my room and watch over my body. I will go astral traveling tonight.”

She nodded, knowingly. They had already rehearsed the procedure for such actions, which, compared with psychic time travel, were relatively simple.

Soon, Sonja was ‘standing watch’, or rather, sitting watch in a lotus position, as Paladin performed. He, too, sat in a lotus position, facing her. His spine was straight, as if it were a hung by a hook from the sky. In that posture, energy can circulate more freely. His breath came slow and steady, rhythmically, like waves washing up on shore.

Paladin centered his thoughts in the tan tien, a site located beneath his solar plexus, and then betook himself up into his pineal gland. There, he stood at the strange portal between dimensions, that secret gateway buried deeply within the brain. He began to think himself up a mantra. It is written that the best mantras are the ones you make up yourself. He told himself:

“Think of the dusk as daylight ends, when the sky is pale purple.

The world is full of cross-roads, doorways, between day
and night, turning points between the seasons, and even
portals between dimensions.”

When the blue day sky meets the fiery rising sun, there is another turning point. He thought of the color mauve, and then let it fill his mind with light. His breath, still steady, became almost hypnotic: “Think nearer now. Nearer. Think of your breath, and how it also has its turning points. BREATHE, NOW...IN...OUT...IN...OUT...IN.”

His mind became the very breath of his mantra, and his whole body moved with it. Now, he wandered through the gray caverns deep within his own mind. There came a flash of light, like a portal opening. Paladin Lamb stepped through it, and entered another dimension.

Now he floated through the dark waters of the world of dreams. Beside him sparkles of light drifted by, like underwater life forms of the deep. In this strange place, men and women became giants, drifting among the stars and galaxies of this universe.

Paladin thought of Tanya, and soon he drifted above her sleeping body. In the ether of this unknown world, he seemed to be weightless, swimming like a scuba diver. He

did a slow breaststroke towards her. In sleep, she had a sweet angelic look upon her face. He reached down and touched her temples with his fingertips. They sparkled with energy, and suddenly, he was inside her, sharing her dream.

Tanya's dreaming mind presented another wildly unexpected world as well. It was peopled with strange, surrealistic images set in motion by some unseen force. Ordinary objects were distorted and juxtaposed, as if in a kaleidoscope of madness. Everything moved in slow motion.

On the wall, there was a ticking sound, an old grandfather clock. Eleven o'clock.

"It's almost time." It was Tanya's voice.

"Yes, it's almost time for the curtain to rise on our little play." It was the calm, nasal tone of Professor Paul Pringle.

Suddenly, a small box appeared, like the ones used for puppet shows. You could see the good doctor towering above the box, like a master puppeteer, manipulating things. The curtain opened. A puppet appeared with black hair and brown skin and blank brown eyes and a vapid smile. It was dressed like an Arab sheik in a parade. It danced onto the stage. Another puppet appeared, a red headed one that looked like a caricature of Tanya. It wore a blue polka dot dress. It handed a big water pistol to the first puppet, and then whispered something into its ear. The first puppet aimed the gun and fired. Insane laughter filled the room.

Then, everything went blank. Now, strange static crackled in, like ghostly signals from an unknown radio station late at night.

What followed was a dream within a dream.

There was deep breathing. Steady rhythmic breath became waves rolling into shore. A beach? Yes, there were people walking on a beach. A man and a woman were walking together, holding hands. Their bodies were bathed in pale yellow moonlight. Above them, a full moon hung in the night sky like a stage prop. The woman in the dream wore a red one piece swimsuit, and her hair was done up to look like a sparkling platinum crown. She had ruby red lipstick that shone with moisture. There was a beauty mark on her face.

The man wore a white beach coat. His face was older, weathered, wiser, like a father figure.

You could feel the soft summer breeze, like a lover's breath.

The sweet silence was shattered by girlish giggles that reminded one of tinkling ice cubes in a bar late at night. She cooed coquettishly.

"Dr. Leary, how did you like that pill I slipped into your drink last night?"

"The whole world felt warm and cozy, as if I was underwater, swimming in the warm sea of my mother's womb. What was that pill?"

"They are called Randy Mandys."

"Sounds like a word play on Rama's mantras."

"What?"

"Old Hindu mysticism. In time long lost to history, the old religion began with drugs, with the first 'soma' drugs. Later, it continued without drugs and evolved into the advanced forms of yoga."

"Like the magic mushrooms of Mexico?"

"Yes, just like magic mushrooms."

"You sound so serious."

“It’s just the college professor thing. I’m so used to playing the role of college professor that sometimes everything I say comes out like that. Sort of like we become our jobs.”

“Oooo.” She cooed.

“What’s that?”

“Just an actress sort of thing.”

“Oh. Yes, of course.” He paused for a moment and asked: “What are your Randy Mandys supposed to do?”

“They turn off your mind and turn your body on.”

“Just the opposite of a real mantra. Well, tell me, where did you get them?”

“You working for the C.I.A., or something?”

“I just asked.”

“I get them from a friend who goes south of the border. Like them?”

“Sort of.”

“Now I need some of your drug.”

“My drug?”

“L.S.D. I need to get some L.S.D. I’ve heard how it can set your mind free.”

“Well, we’ll see.”

“Please help me, Dr. Leary. I’ve tried everything else.”

The dream then faded out.

Paladin thought to himself: “That was Marilyn Monroe. She’s been dead for five years. She was with Dr. Timothy Leary, the drug guru. Come to think of it, he did work for the C.I.A.. What strange and garbled memory is some unknown dreamer sending out? Could any of these strange people around the wrestling troupe know Dr. Leary and be dreaming about him? Or is Marilyn Monroe’s spirit still hovering around? He smiled as a voice from within his mind said: “Welcome to the 1960s, when it all began.”

Again, everything went blank. Then a light seemed to come on, and Paladin Lamb could see the room in the real world through Tanya’s eyes. She was waking up. He was seeing through her eyes as she got up, and began to walk. It seems the dream was over. Was he going to be stuck in her body with her?

Paladin Lamb woke up, relieved to be back in Cowboy Bob’s body.

Sonja Savage was slapping his face to bring him around. She was smiling. She hit him again, and again.

“All right, already. You brought me out of it!”

“One more slap, just for fun?”

“Uhhh...no. I’m awake now.”

“Awww shucks. I was just getting warmed up. I think I’m going to enjoy working with you.”

He staggered to his feet.

“Wow! I was in Tanya’s mind. That was quite a wild dream she was having.”

“Share it. Let’s analyze it together. ”

She smiled sweetly, and sat down on the bed. He joined her. They held hands, and talked.

Chapter Four: 'Rasslin' in Ricklan'

Leo puffed on his cigar: "Boy, that crowd is jus' a hootin' an' a hollrin'! It's that weirdo Looney Leduc with those knee high black leather boots of hers and all her kinky talk about the dark side, it really gets 'em goin'!"

"She kinda gives me the willies with that satanic stuff. What if she really is a part of the devil's dark brigade?" Cowboy Bob was standing beside Leo the promoter, his massive arms folded across his chest. They were by the wrestlers' entrance to another small Southern arena, watching the action in the ring.

"Aww, c'mon, Bob, she's no more harmful than my granny doin' the Ouija board. It's all in fun."

"Until someone takes it seriously." said the Cowboy.

Paladin looked up at the ring. Looney Leduc strutted around, wearing high black boots and a black star-studded bathing suit that showed off her shiny and well-developed glutes. Half her face was painted red, the other half, black, in a crazy characature of gnostic religion. She screamed as she sat on her opponent's chest: "I have been with the **Black Beast** from **Hell**. Have you?" The other woman, in a turquoise bathing suit and blue boots, writhed on the mat beneath her, looking stunned. The Looney One stood up, roaring with laughter, and kicked the prone woman in the face. "I didn't think so." Then she turned her back on the woman, wiggled her rear end suggestively, and strutted across the ring to tag her partner in. Lilly Limone, also in a star studded black bathing suit, still wrestled barefoot.

"That wife of mine! She's a genius." Leo chuckled. "It was her idea to team up with Looney..." He puffed on his cigar: "Lilly and Looney. What a pair. But I wouldn't want to cross them two gals."

In nothing flat, Lilly was using her feet to flatten the face of her opponent against a turnbuckle.

Leo chuckled again: "Lilly always says there's nothin' like a good facial massage to put a gal in her place."

Lilly's victim squirmed while getting her facial. She pounded on the ring with her boots. It sounded like a drum.

Soon, the match ended in a slashing flash of savagery, as Lilly flipped her foe across the ring and cart wheeled after her to fall on her for the pin. Lilly's hand was raised in victory. She strutted around the ring doing a sort of bump and grind that really got the fans going. She was the ultimate "rich bitch", and she "didn't care who knowed it."

The women quickly left the ring. Cowboy Bob watched them go. He couldn't help but notice that Lilly still knew how to fill out a bathing suit in just the right places.

"YA - hoo! Ya - hoo !" The Crowd yelled out, as the next event began with the stylish entry into the ring of one of the participants.

"Whoo!"

"Woo! Woo!"

"EYA YA YA YA!"

Cowboy Bob watched from the wings as Chief Arrowhead entered the ring, doing a poor imitation of an Indian war dance. The chief wore buckskins and a full feathered war bonnet. He looked like an old dime store Indian set in motion by some timeless magic. His craggy, chiselled face and hook nose gave him the look of a weathered and wizened old chief.

His real name was Joe Scalise and he was an Italian from the Bronx. When he started this

act, he'd never even met an Indian.

Inside the Cowboy, the Wandering Spirit of Paladin Lamb felt outraged by this vaudeville act that insulted his Native North American ancestry. But he could only wait and watch and suffer in silence. He had to keep his mind on his mission. A Civil Rights song went through his mind: "Keep your eyes on the Prize..."

The crowd cheered the "chief" as he did his little dance into the ring. To them, he represented the Noble Red Man.

Now the BOOS began as the Swamp Rat and his girl Tony Tulips entered the arena. Swamp Rat's thick black hair was wild and his full beard was scraggly and unkempt. His hairy chest and arms glistened beneath his open leather vest. The Words on the back of his vest said, simply, "Swamp Rat". He wore pants that looked like overalls. His garbage green pants were stained in places with some dark material. Calf-high old black rubber boots that could have been used by a fisherman - or a sewer worker, completed the picture. In a word, he looked dirty.

His girl followed him, looking downcast and obedient. She had a thin and grim rat - like face and dirty blonde hair that came to her shoulders. Her hair was so straight and stiff that it looked like part of an old broom. She wore a grass green one - piece bathing suit and fashionable dark green rubber boots. She also had a leather vest with letters on the back that read : "Property of Swamp Rat."

They entered the ring. Swamp Rat gave out with a Tarzan yell as he did so. His girl removed his boots so he could wrestle barefoot. He was not wearing any socks. She went and sat in the corner, behind the ring post, reverently holding his big rubber boots in her hands. She sniffed them adoringly. She looked the very picture of humility and resignation.

She was so different from the likes of Lilly or Tanya or Sonya. Everything about her seemed to say: "I am the other side of your society, the part that lives under rocks with the maggots and the worms of the world."

The match began.

The men danced warily 'round one another.

Chief Arrowhead caught the wild man in an arm lock. He pulled the long hair of the "Indian" to break the hold, and the chief fell to the mat.

The pattern repeated itself in slightly different form several times, as the match progressed slowly.

The Cowboy wished he could see the Swamp Rat wrestle one of his white alligators. They were a special mutant breed he raised on his 'gator farm in Louisiana. Now that would be interesting.

His eyes went to the girl sitting in the corner, holding the boots as if they were some sort of prize that she had been given. Man, she did look strange!

The Cowboy remembered hearing Professor Paul remark that Toni Tulips just had to be a masochist to go for this guy. Watching the show, he shook his head.

"She must be nuts to go for him."

He remembered a small girl in his old high school who used to let her runty boyfriend openly torment her, but who fiercely refused any help. She seemed to love it when he twisted her arm or pulled her hair or...whatever. She'd kiss his hand when they met. She even carried his books for him.

The yelling of the crowd brought him back to the present. The Chief had finally had enough, and went on the warpath with a series of "tomahawk chops" that sort of resembled weak "judo chops", only the one throwing the blow kept a limp wrist while doing so.

Swamp Rat fell all over the ring.

His girl tossed one of his boots to him. He reached into the boot and seemed to take some sort of weapon of it while the Chief conveniently looked the other way, arguing with the referee...He got up and snuck up on the Chief from behind. He hit the man from behind with whatever "weapon" it was. Chief Arrowhead fell down and the Swamp Rat pinned him. The crowd let off a chorus of BOOS. They were booing the result. Inside the Cowboy, Paladin Lamb felt like booing the performance.

The wrestlers quickly left the ring.

Silent expectation filled the arena. The next match would be something special.

Organ music started up, a Russian music from the 1812 overture adapted for the purpose. Starway Moon flitted by Paladin Lamb and pirouetted along the entrance way to the ring. The crowd cheered him: Starway Moon, the wrestling ballet dancer!

Once in the ring, Starway Moon danced around and threw tiny golden ballet slippers to the crowd. Children fought with each other over these little souvenirs, but at least one of them was snapped up by a big fat man with a red beard. Fans around the fat man booed as he fought off the kids around him to keep his prize.

Paladin could hear Leo mutter under his breath: "What an act!"

Now it was Professor Paul's turn to make his entrance. He did so in the finest tradition of pro-rasslin'. Wearing regal purple silk robes, he waddled into the ring to the tune of "Old Man River." Then he opened his robes dramatically to reveal a shiny red woman's bathing suit wrapped around his substantial girth. He shrugged, and his robes fell to the floor. Then, to a bump and grind tune, he wiggled out of the bathing suit like a striptease dancer. He stripped down to a pair of royal blue ring trunks. The homophobics in the crowd went wild. All their own repressed desires mutated into screams of hate that reached a crescendo as the Professor finished his little strip.

Leo, smiling, shook his head: "That guy can sure draw heat!"

The announcer did his bit and the bell rang to start the semi-final match. Paladin thought how this would be a test of tried and true traditional values if there ever was one.

Suddenly, Starway Moon snatched the Professor's red girl's bathing suit from him and ran around the ring waving it in the air. The crowd howled with laughter. The Professor charged at him and missed. Starway held the red bathing suit as a bullfighter would hold a cape. The organist, with a quick wit that had been well rehearsed, inserted a little bit of Spanish music, from "the brave bulls" or some such thing. Once again, the learned Professor charged like a raging bull. Starway swiftly stepped aside and waved the big man by with his red "cape". He shouted "Holay!" The crowd loved it.

Leo whistled: "Lilly did this choreography, too. That wife of mine is a genius!"

The wrestlers in the ring repeated the bullfight moves twice more, and then it was time for others to enter into things. This, too, was in the script.

Nick Knuckle now appeared at ringside, unseen by Starway Moon. Everyone knew that Nick was the Professor's tag-team partner. Entering the ring as fast as lightning, he brained the ballet dancer with a chair. Starway crumpled to the mat.

"That oughta slow da bum down !" He growled. Then he and the Professor began to stomp on Starway Moon.

"There's yer cue." Said Leo to the Cowboy, who, as usual, seemed to be lost in some daydream or other.

The Cowboy made his entrance. The fans cheered wildly as he ran into the ring to defend

the fallen Starway Moon. He grabbed the chair and brained the good Professor, who began to bleed from his forehead. He then started to wander around the ring looking like he was in a daze and blubbing like a baby. The cowboy threatened Nick Knuckle, who quickly got his partner out of the ring. The fans cheered as Starway Moon staggered slowly to his feet to have his right arm raised in victory.

The Cowboy helped Starway leave the ring to a chorus of cheers.

After a short break to let things cool down a bit, it was time for the main event. Now Cowboy Bob and Nick Knuckle returned to the ring. They would square off, mano a mano, the good guy in his white hat and white cowboy boots and blue trunks, against the bad guy in black tights. This, too, had been scripted by Lilly Limone, but one always had to be careful. Nick Knuckle had the knack of hurting other wrestlers “by accident”.

He seemed to enjoy such accidents, a holdover from his days as a lineman in professional football.

As the Cowboy came into the ring, Nick Knuckle was already there, strutting around and challenging the fans to come into the ring and fight him. The red-necks in the crowd saw themselves in Nick and they just hated it. The arena filled with boos.

After the usual introductions and the various formalities that went with them, the match got under way. It began with the usual series of punches and slams and elbows and kicks. It ended with what was perhaps the first legitimate wrestling hold of the fight. The Cowboy caught Nick in a headlock, ran across the ring, jumped into the air, and bulldogged Nick face-first into the mat. The crowd loved it, so the cowboy did it several times more for better effect. He thought to himself: “Gee...this is fun.”

Finally, he pinned his opponent. The fans loved it. Someone in the audience said: “This is the perfect ending to the perfect night.” Someone else agreed.

This time, it was Nick Knuckle who emerged with a bloody, broken nose. By accident, of course.

Chapter Five: Lieutenant Landmine

The new recruit ‘rassler projected the perfect persona for the Vietnam war era. Even his ring name had an aura of authenticity to it: “ Lieutenant Landmine, the man so tough that even his own troops couldn’t frag him.” In the real ‘Nam, men had tried to do so, but no-one lived to talk about it. Back in civies with a purple heart and very little else, this burly ex-marine found himself looking for work. Pro-wrestling seemed a lot more lucrative - and a good deal easier on the nerves - than his old job of driving a truck and organizing unions for the teamsters.

Leo the promoter introduced him to Cowboy Bob (the face) and Professor Paul (the heel). The four of them sat down in a corner of the Beanery bar and set about deciding whether Lieutenant Landmine would be a face (a good guy), or a heel (a bad guy). As Professor Paul always said, a few jugs of beer always helped with such momentous decisions. So they ordered several pitchers of beer, and a coke for the Cowboy, who didn’t drink.

At six foot three inches and three hundred pounds, Landmine certainly had the size to be a bad guy. Still, he had a chubby, cute babyface that could make him a natural good guy. He had more hair on his massive arms than he did on his crewcut head.

On his right forearm, he had a tattoo of Marilyn Monroe with the words: “She was just an Angel”. So he obviously also had a soft spot. Somewhere.

Landmine had worn his ring regalia into the bar: a black muscle top, khaki pants and army boots. Professor Paul looked at the boots and broke the ice by saying: “ Nice army boots. Were they a hand - me - down from your mother?”

He poured three glasses of beer from a pitcher.

“How did you know? Does your mom wear army boots, too? Or is that where you get the big girl’s bathing suits you wear into the ring?”

He chugged a beer, and the Professor followed suit.

“Ever play ‘Colonel Puff?’” asked the good Professor.

“That’s a good drinking game.”

The Cowboy interjected: “I guess I missed that course in school.”

“They didn’t teach that in school!” roared the Lieutenant. “That’s a post graduate course. Colonel Puff is a game for serious drinkers.”

Professor Paul had poured himself another glass. He stood. He went through a series of motions slapping his chest, then his bottom, then clapping his hands together, then saying “This is Colonel Puff for the first time!” Then he downed his beer.

Landmine stood and said: “Then I do the same thing and say: ‘This is Colonel Puff for the second time!’ And then I drink my beer down. It’s a great way to train to develop co-ordination.”

“ Not just yet .” said Leo, smiling. “We’ve got work to do.”

The Lieutenant still drained his beer, but then sat down.

Cowboy Bob tried to be helpful: “A U.S. Marine just has to be a good guy, just like Gomer Pyle.”

“That’s what the wretches like to think! ” said the Looey, with a wicked wink.

“Wretches?”

“The enlisted men. They prefer to be called ‘wretches’. It matches their mood, and shows that you know how to treat them right.”

He slurped another beer down as Professor Paul tried hard to match the pace of his drinking.

“Besides” snarled the ‘Looney’, “If you do try to be ‘one of the boys’, you don’t get no respect.”

Professor Paul smiled and giggled: “Maybe you should be a heel. You’re too honest to be a good guy. Take my friend Nick Knuckle. He reflects the common man in all his redneck glory, and they hate him for it.”

“Listen, guys...” said Leo the Promoter. “My wife has come up with a good idea. We’ll experiment on different ‘rasslin cards in small towns. The good Lieutenant here will fight Professor Paul in one town, and be a face. Then he’ll fight you, Cowboy, in the next, and there he’ll be a heel. We’ll see how the audience reacts in each arena. We’re gonna get with this modern age. We’re gonna test market Lieutenant Landmine!”

Inside the Cowboy’s head, Paladin Lamb the time-traveler watched Lieutenant Landmine with fascination. The hours wore on, as they often do for non-drinkers watching other people get drunk. He felt like a scientist studying a Neanderthaller, only somehow he sensed that Lieutenant Landmine was a nice Neanderthaller.

As he began to get drunk, the good Lieutenant began to bemoan the fate of soldiers in civilian life. Eventually that led him to reveal his private dream to others, who by then were becoming quite drowsy...Only the Cowboy remained alert.

Landmine growled into his cups: “What this country needs is a good 5 cent cigar, cheap beer, and a military take-over.” He drank some beer.

“Hawsh dat?” asked Professor Paul, a bit the worse for wear.

“Look at military life. Everyone knows his place. Order and Honor go together like spit and polish. The military virtues are worth cultivating: courage, comaraderie and charity, a group always seeking higher ground the better to rain fire down on the enemy.”

I remember in the ‘Nam, there was one little fellow, all five foot three of him...Just a pokey little runt. Well, one day he got goin’ on a machine gun on a hill, mowin’ Charlie down like they was flies. He was laughin’ and shoutin’: “Back home, I’m just a dinky little runt. But here, I’m a king. The King of Spades, King Death...that’s me.” You see, the army is a great equalizer...equal opportunity for all.

That little fellow...I’ll never forget him. His name was Jake. We called him the snake. Sometimes he went down Charlie’s tunnels just like a snake, only he had a flame thrower for a flickering tongue and machine guns for poison teeth.

I met up with him again after I hit civvies. He was not the same man. He’d got back Sateside a year before I did. I ran into him in a bar in ‘Frisco. He told me he’d gone back to his hometown in Kansas. No one wanted anything to do with him, because they felt guilty for not goin’ to the ‘Nam themselves. So he couldn’t get work. He left town a second time. When he left town before, he was hopin’ to become a war hero. This time, he was just an unemployed bum. Just like I was to become.

Well, long story short, he found no steady work and lots of drugs. That night in the bar, I left him in a stupor. I didn’t even say “Have a good life.” Like we used to do in the ‘Nam, when we said “Goodbye” to someone going home. He wasn’t gonna have a good life anyway. That much was obvious.

Two weeks later, he died in a traffic accident. He had run in front of a truck. They didn’t exactly say it when I checked it out, but I think they thought it was suicide.

I know it was. In that bar, he’d told me he felt like running in front of a truck and ending it all. I guess he succeeded in his last mission. ”

Lieutenant Landmine stood and quaffed his beer in a mock toast.

“Mission accomplished, soldier!”

He smiled cutely and poured another beer. His bright beaming face had a way of looking almost angelic, a sort of sweet boyish innocence the years had not yet taken away. He went on, his voice, lowered:

“Now take civies. Big business runs everything. In business, you have to be cunning, crafty, and cutthroat. It also helps to have a shallow and greedy wife to push you on a bit. The nasty napalm of nepotism is everywhere. Everything is decided in the secret back rooms. I feel safer on the battlefield.”

He took another gulp of beer, and then went on: “The businessman makes a profit from death. The soldier looks death in the face and grows from the experience.”

The Cowboy agreed: “It’s like that classic writer says, ‘ You only live twice, once when you are born and once when you look death in the face.’”

“ Exactly” said the Looey. “ Was you over in the ‘Nam? ”

Chapter Six: "Green fields"

"Once there were Green fields, kissed by the sun." An old song blared out from a ghetto blaster. Sonya Savage and Paladin Lamb strolled together through a park near their hotel, as if they were two lovers. It would be a chance for them to talk privately.

The park itself looked like something out of a Norman Rockwell painting. For some people, grass was supposed to be neat and manicured. For others, it was supposed to have the sweet odor of incense. By the smell of things, that group had been here, too. An old Sherman tank, with a white star on its turret that would have made General Patton proud, stood guard over the park. It was bedecked with pink flowers. SO 1968ish !

Sonya was saying: "The problem is, I cannot link the year 1968 to the coming Prophet of the New Age. A lot happened in this year, but none of it can be clearly connected to the New Age Prophet. But the would be Time Terrorists, the New Gang of Four, have figured it out. That much is certain. They chose this year, and none other. They must have had a reason. There are only a few places where a stream can be diverted, where the course of history can be changed."

They saw three figures coming, girls wearing orange jerseys and bright blue miniskirts and boots. They bobbed up and down as they bounced cheerfully along, pioneers in going without bras. On their sweaters was a single word in bold and royal blue: "Bobby".

As the girls approached, two split off to the side.

"Bye, Petey."

"Bye, girls."

Sonya and Paladin sat down on a park bench. The girl called "Petey" sat down next to them as her friends moved off through the park. She carried a plain paper bag. "Petey" looked Sonya in the eyes, then got up and went over to them, and shook hands.

"Hi. I'm "Petey". What's your name?"

"Savage. Sonya Savage."

"Hi."

"I'm Bob." said Paladin, using his cover.

"Hi, Bob."

"I'm glad to meet you. May I sit with you while I eat my lunch?"

Her smile was as white as toothpaste. She was a short, slim brownette, about 18 years of age. She looked like a political hound dog who had sensed a prospect or two.

The three of them sat down. Sonya and Paladin would have to talk later.

Petey seemed to be all bubbling with enthusiasm. She took a sandwich out of the bag, but, before she ate, she gushed out: "Isn't Bobby Kennedy the greatest? Like wow! I met him in person in New York last year, and I've been working for him ever since. You guys into politics - uh, Sonja is it?"

"Yes, my name is Sonya." She smiled. Using her real name had been a slip of sorts, but this girl would never know it. Sonya was just not used to using someone else's name. After all, she was a historian, not a secret agent.

"Sonya. That's Russian, isn't it?"

"German. Well, sort of Russian German. My ancestors migrated to Germany during World War II, when the Wehrmacht recruited them to fight the communists..." Sonya's ancestry was complicated, even by the standards of the year 3033 C.E., the year she had come back from.

"I understand. My nickname Petey stands for Petra. Petra Kelly. You might say I'm sort

of German Irish.”

“German Irish?” Sonya raised an eyebrow. The big wave of Irish immigration into Germany was years in the future.

Petey raised her own eyebrow in response. “I came from Germany. I was born there. But my Dad...my step - Dad, he’s in the U.S. Army. I carry his name proudly. So, you see, I’m sort of International, just like America is. America can be a model for the whole world if it wants to be. That’s why we need Bobby, because he’s got a dream.”

Paladin felt like reminding her that Canadians also come from many lands, but he held his peace. Best not to argue with a political junkie when she’s high. He’d learned that the hard way by dating a young Canadian Reformer in 1998. You cannot command the floods, you cannot stop the snows of winter, and you can’t argue with a teenage girl who has fallen in love with politics.

Sonya and Paladin just smiled at each other and nodded.

Petey took her new girl friend by the hand, and said: “I know the Russians are the bad guys now. It used to be the Germans. Now it’s the Russians. There’s always gotta be a bad guy so as to justify spending all the money on arms. They fear the Russians because of communism. But with your background, you must realize that over two million White Russians fought on Germany’s side during the war. You know, my own family never supported Hitler, but I was born in Mengele’s home town. So I could be branded as a Nazi because my neighbors were. And that was all before I was born, anyway. Things do get so tangled up! But you are welcome here in America, even if you are a Ruskie!”

Sonya smiled uneasily: “Uh, thanks. I think.”

Petey sat down and wolfed down the sandwich. Then, she stood and shook both their hands.

“I’m working on Senator Kennedy’s campaign. He’s trying to bring all the people together. I hope you’ll support us. It is all one world, you know. Well, I’ve got to rush off now. TA DA !”

With that, the young woman in the blue boots bounced along the pathway and out of the park.

Sonya sighed. “It’s hard to believe that’s Petra Kelly. Or the person who will grow into Petra Kelly.”

“Who is Petra Kelly? I never heard of her.”

“Petra Kelly? In later years, she will become a leader of the Green Party in Germany. Her vision of a new way, neither red nor white, a green way, will continue to grow long after her death. Some day, a movie will be made about her. It will be called “the Green Goddess.” It tells her tragic story as a classic romance. In the end, her lover, a retired German General, murders her and then kills himself. There are dark hints that he was a Soviet spy all along. That movie will move millions to tears, among them, the man who will become the New Age Prophet. Just after seeing the movie, he will have the first of his Visions. And someday, his Visions will truly shake the world.”

“Inspired by the life of that girl we just met?”

“Petra Kelly...yes, I remember now. She did get her start working in Bobby Kennedy’s ill-fated campaign. Maybe she is our key link. Whatever happens to Bobby Kennedy will change her life, and that, in turn, will influence the coming New Age Prophet.

They sat silently for a moment. Sonya whistled softly: “Who is to look into the sands of time and say which grain will grow and which will not?”

Just then, Tanya came around the corner with what looked to be a new found friend. The man was about six foot five and must have weighed two fifty. Bulging biceps burst from a tight purple muscle shirt. His massive arms were tattooed with red and a darker purple ink, showing crosses and roses. You could tell by the cuts of his muscles that he was a bodybuilder. He wore his hair in a crew cut. The two were holding hands as they strolled towards Paladin and his partner. It almost seemed as if Tanya were trying to tease the cowboy, taunting him that she could get other men.

“Well, well, well, Miss Egghead and the cute cowboy. How are you two making out today?” She smiled a bit too sweetly.

“Just fine”, said Sonya, trying to avoid her eyes.

“I’d like you to meet my new friend, ‘Chemo’. He’s studying for the ministry. With luck, he’ll turn out like my grandfather, father Grigory Rasputin. You know, Rasputin was an evangelist, too. And a faith healer. He had his own kind of Revival meetings in the woods outside St. Petersburg.”

The man beside her smiled awkwardly, and bowed in silence.

“Chemo is also a martial artist, and he’s promised to show me some moves.” She giggled. “I just love those exotic martial arts of his.” She squeezed his hand, and said:

“Well, toodle - oo, you two...”

They walked off into the park. There was something smug about the way that Tanya rolled her rump as they strolled along.

Sonya sat stiffly, staring into space. Her eyes had a strange and mystic look, as if fixed on some point over the horizon. She heard a different voice speaking, from a different time...

“Many are the myths of the ancient martial arts,” said the tall bald woman in the evergreen ghi. She stood at a lectern. Behind her ranged the large charcoal gray screens of “*Military Net Ed Services, Inc.*” When not in use, they looked like the blackboards in an ancient classroom. But this was the Citadel of the CEnturies, the ultimate military college in the year 3000 C.E.. The girls here were all elite cadets. All were bald. All wore green ghis. And what ghis they were! Those dark green uniforms were a living testimony to modern science, for the miniature electronics woven into their fabric gave the wearer ten times her normal strength. They were made from a special material that felt as soft as silk to the wearer, and yet was still as hard as space age steel outside. They could also maintain the wearer’s body temperature at a constant level whatever the weather might be.

The presenter presented on, in a matter of fact tone: “Consider, for instance, the archaic sport of Tae Kwon Do. It seems hard to believe now, but this was once an Olympic sport. It was invented by U.S. servicemen during the Korean civil war. They had learned karate in Japan, and then re-invented it, altering it for taller people. Then some businessmen took over, and invented Korean roots for it, complete with “mystic” philosophy based on the legalistic precepts of Confucius. They made it an Olympic sport, justifying themselves in doing so because karate wasn’t really Japanese either. It originally came from Okinawa, where Chinese traders taught the locals to protect themselves from Japanese pirates. The pirates learned karate, and took it home with them as part of their booty. We now know that all martial arts really began in China.

Finally, in the year 2500 CE, after years of applying to be taken in, Korea was finally accepted as a province of China. There was no longer any need to pretend about such matters, and Kung Fu, in all its wondrous varieties, became the Olympic sport.

Tae Kwon Do was almost forgotten until the American Southern Baptists took it over and

made it their own martial art. That way, they didn't have to worry about un-Christian influences in the martial arts anymore. After all, when the truth was finally told, it had been Southern Baptist troops that had invented it in the first place.

That last process began much earlier, with the emergence of the legendary figure "Chemo". We are not sure if he really existed, but according to the story, he was a champion at Tae Kwon Do and also a Southern Baptist preacher. He is supposed to have carried a large wood cross into the ring before his matches. He had the name of Jesus tattooed upon his chest, and on his back, he had a cross. As he used his martial arts skills, he spread the word of God. Other Southern Baptists followed him. Soon, many took up martial arts. Then they, too, could reach out to others while teaching the ways of warriors. As had happened so often in the oriental martial arts, the ways of the warrior carried the Song of the Spirit to many who would otherwise never hear it. In time, they renamed the sport of Tae Kwon Do. Today, we call it "Chemo" therapy.

It's not just ancient herstory, either, girls. Our modern Tai Bo aerobics workouts originated with that sport."

One of the girls passed a piece of paper to another. The note read:

"Let's go to the donut shop after class. That cute boy named Elvis is working today."

"SONYA! SONYA!" said the cowboy as he slapped her face. She came to.

"Once more for good measure."

He obliged.

"Thanks, I didn't really need the last one, but I am feeling a little bit masochistic today."

"What happened to you there?"

"I was having a 'flash forward'. You know, I warned you about them. Like, sixties acid heads sometimes had flashbacks. Well, us time travelers sometimes have flash forwards. It can be quite a trip. Anything could trigger one in either of us at any time. But I'm OK now. Thanks for slapping my face."

"I guess we'd better be rolling along as well." He offered her his hand, she took it, and got up.

"Man, that was quite a trip. I thought I was back in class at the Citadel of CEnturies...Wow! Then I woke up back here."

Paladin Lamb and Sonya Savage, secure in their borrowed bodies, strolled out of the park, holding hands, swinging their arms freely. It felt good to be alive in these happy times, for the sixties were an era of hope. The whole world was filled with good vibrations. So different from the nasty nineties yet to come.

As they swung along the street, they passed by some more old buildings with bars over the windows. On the side of one dilapidated wall was an old movie poster, weathered by the wind and the rain. Paladin stopped and looked at it. "The Manchurian Candidate" it said, "starring Frank Sinatra."

"Manchurian candidate?" he said, "That seems to ring a bell."

"It should." said Sonya. "Even in my times, that movie is still considered to be a classic of ancient cinema. I saw it as part of a documentary in one of my herstory classes."

"Herstory Class? It's just a thriller, entertainment..."

"It is important beyond other movies of its day because it shows the power of mind manipulation. In these days – and even in your days, too, mind control was in its infancy. When the Chinese did it in Korea, they called it brainwashing. When the Americans did it at home, they called it marketing."

“ I took a course in marketing once. Then I went under cover as a used car salesman. What a business! I felt safer riding with the Hell’s Angels.”

“You probably were safer.”

“So, tell me about that movie. I’ve never seen it. Now you’ve got me curious.”

“A platoon of American soldiers are captured by the Communists in Korea. One of them is programmed to become a killer. Back in the United States his programming is triggered using an ordinary playing card as a symbol. A voice over the telephone would tell him to get out a deck of cards. He would, and when he pulled a certain card...a

Queen of Diamonds, I think, or maybe it was the Queen of Hearts. Then he would enter a hypnotic state, and do what he was told. He would kill on command. The funny thing is that when the movie was made in the early sixties, the Central Intelligence Agency was trying to develop the same technology using L.S.D. and hypnosis. The only thing the movie misses is the specific drug.”

“Acid and hypnosis. You can do a lot with that combination.” He mused.

“Don’t we both know it?”

“Sometimes the faculties of fantasy can be amazing.”

“If they are fantasy.”

In the distance, they could make out a hulking figure lumbering towards them, dressed in black sweats and army boots.

“Hey, that’s Lieutenant Landmine. I’ll bet he’s looking for the Cowboy to go over tonight’s script.”

“Then I guess you’d better change personalities. Be careful not to sound too intelligent. When they expect you to be stupid, sometimes stupidity is the best policy.”

“You sound like a Republican candidate.”

“Back in this primitive age, the woods are full of Republicans.”

“This here is gonna be a real important rasslin’ match. Lieutenant Landmine and I are on the semi-final tonight, just before the Professor and Starway Moon. It is gonna be a sorta test.”

“Test?”

“Leo’s gonna test market the Looey. In this town, he’s gonna be the bad guy. Ah’m the good guy, see? Ah wear a white hat. So the fans know Ah’m the good guy. If he’s fightin’ me, he’s gotta be the bad guy. Right?”

Wall, in the next town, he’ll fight Professor Paul. The Professor is a bad guy, because of his fancy ring outfits, so then the Looey will become the good guy. Follow me so far?

Leo an’ Lilly will see how the fans react and then decide whether Lieutenant Landmine, the American soldier, will be a good guy or a bad guy. Let the market decide. It’s the American way...or so they say.”

“ Pretty sophisticated for Leo.”

“ It was his wife’s idea.”

“ Hi, guys.” said the Looey as they met up. “Say hey, Cowboy, you wanna go over our plans for tonight?”

Across the street, they could now see Starway Moon and Loony Leduc. Oddly enough, they made a nice looking couple. Loony wore a long sunny yellow halter and a long skirt decorated in brown, green and orange earth patterns. Starway wore black leather pants and a matching vest, along with a starchy crisp white shirt. The couple walked up to them as the group looked on in silence.

They would hear Loony speed-rapping at the top of her voice as the couple, paying no

attention to their fellow wrestlers, approached..

“ So, you see, she uses a crystal ball given to her by an old gypsy woman when she was just a little girl. She calls it her third eye, with which she can see the future.”

“ Say,” said Sonya, when the two had come up to them, “ What’s that crystal ball stuff all about ? It sounds so interesting ! ”

“Oh, nothing,” said Starway, looking away. His calm voice had a nasal twang to it, just like his arch enemy in the ring, Professor Paul. Starway always spoke softly, so as to be more menacing that way. “One of Loony’s loony friends has predicted that Bobby Kennedy will be assassinated soon.”

“It’ll look good on the little runt after what he did to Jimmy Hoffa. I hear there’s an open contract on him.” Growled the Looney.

There was a brief silence as Starway Moon stared into the man’s eyes, and said: “Are you planning on filling the order?”

“You never know.” snarled Landmine, “I could use the dough.”

“That’s an awful thing to say!” said Loony. “You better be careful. If he does get shot, people might suspect you.”

“I never said nothin’ about shootin’ him.” said the giant Lieutenant. “You in on somethin’, baby?”

“Only when I connect with the Spirit side.”

“So, tell me, am I gonna wind up bein’ a good guy or a bad guy?”

“The spirits wont answer trivial questions.”

Starway injected: “When you see into a crystal ball, you must know how to read patterns in the swirling smoke. Then you see what will come to be if the currents that run in time continue on course. Of course, things can always change after you have seen your vision, then the future that you saw will never happen.” He bowed slightly, and smiled.

“Or so they say, my friend.”

“I sure hope she’s wrong.” said Looney Leduc. “That Bobby Kennedy is too cute to kill. He reminds me of Starway Moon a bit.”

Sonya said to Looney Leduc: “If you want a second opinion, I will read your Tarot.”

“Hey, that’s cool, goof. I dig tarot cards. Especially that cool Hanged Man. AND DEATH. AND THE DEVIL. I should make them part of my act.”

Sonya said: “Be careful you don’t become the fool.”

“I probably should. I’m always foolin’ around.”

“Look, folks.” Said the cowboy. The good Lieutenant and I have things to talk about...”

“Boy talk, how boring.” said Looney.

“But that’s cool”, said Sonya. “Looney and I need to get some girl talk in.”

“We do?”

“ We do.” She took her by the arm. “I’ll show you my new tarot cards. They were designed by Aleistair Crowley.”

“666...the number of the Great Beast. Cool.”

“Come on, kid. I’ll show you some real magik.”

“Cool.”

And so the little group split up.

The Cowboy and the Marine watched the others walk away from them. Landmine broke the silence: “Gonna go do some girl talk! an’ there he goes off with them. Sometimes I wonder about that Starway Moon! He’s always hangin’ with the broads. He acts like he’s one of ‘em. He

don't seem to have no male friends. I tell ya, there's somethin' funny about that guy."

"Seems O.K. to me." Said the Cowboy. "Maybe he just likes girls a lot."

"Put that little creep in my Platoon fer a month an' I'll straighten him out good. Har ! Har ! Har !"

"Ah see you been pumpin' iron with Nick Knuckle again. You're copyin' his laugh agin."

"Hell, anyone that trains on beer an' cigars can't be all that bad !"

"Come on, big guy, we've got a fight to plan. You learn a lot when you wear a white hat all the time. You get a good view of the bad guys. Come on. I'll give you some pointers on how to be a bad guy."

"I don't think I need no lessons on that."

Chapter Seven: The Test

The Cowboy was already dressed for his match. He sat and stared idly at the room around him. The dressing room walls were the yellow - brownish tint of a nicotine stain. The dark brown benches were worn by years of use. The metal lockers were a faded tan color. They, too, showed signs of age, including a few dents where angry fists had pounded them in years gone by.

Strange thoughts entered the Cowboy's mind. The coming test should be a foregone conclusion, but would it be that simple? How will the fans react to Lieutenant Landmine? The first part of the test was only minutes away. Will the Vietnam soldier wind up being a good guy, or a bad guy? Back in Europe, in the Big One, there was never any doubt about it. G.I. Joe was a hero. He was a hero, too, in the Pacific, when he fought the yellow peril of Japan. And in Korea, he was a hero, stopping Commie human wave attacks with little more than his courage. But somehow, Cowboy Bob had a hunch, it might be different now. This was the Viet Nam era. Waging war wasn't popular anymore. Times were changing, or so the song said. He felt real uneasy.

Inside the Cowboy's head, Paladin Lamb was still the ever-present time-traveling ghost rider. He could not help but think: "if only the Cowboy knew what the years ahead would bring."

On the next bench, Starway Moon sat still, reading a pocket book. He was wearing white gym socks and a pair of that new black bikini underwear for men. Real avant guard stuff. As usual. The newest thing on Broadway. Or was it off Broadway?

The Cowboy looked at the book. The cover showed a pretty blonde. The title was a person's name. Christine Jorgenson. It was not a familiar name.

"Good book?" The Cowboy asked.

"Y - yes. It is." said Starway Moon, in his usual soft and somehow sinister voice.

"What's it about?"

"A pioneer."

"What pioneer?"

"This ex-G.I. that had a sex change operation. The first one ever. Like man, I bet that took as much courage as going into space."

"Sheh-Zeam! What will they think of next?"

"It is real interesting. It seems Christine had always felt like a man trapped in a woman's body, so s/he had an operation to make his body female."

"Never did hear of such a thing" said the Cowboy, grinning, uneasy about it all.

"The Indians call such people 'Two Spirits'. They believe that they can see further into the spirit world because they have two selves. White men fear such people because they intuitively sense this. And most white men fear the spirit world, as well."

"Guess some folks fear anything that's different, pahdah. You seem to know a lot about them people. "

"Just a little that I've read. Such people are everywhere, hidden among the ordinary population like aliens from outer space. And they've been among us for centuries. You know, the wife of one of Custer's soldiers was one of them, too. After the massacre at Little Big Horn, where her husband was killed, she committed suicide. It was only then that they discovered she had a male body. The undertaker got a real surprise."

"That's gruesome."

"It is a sad story. I'm always looking for such oddities. Someday I'd like to write about them."

“ When your ballet career is over ?”

“Yes.”

“ When my ‘rasslin’ career is over, I want to become a real cowboy. With a real ranch.”

Leo the Promoter barged into the room, flanked by two men. He walked over to the cowboy.

“ Well, Cowboy, we gonna get real scientific tonight. Mah wife got real fancy this time. We gonna have real live pollsters out there watchin’ you. You’re gonna make history!”

“I thought we was gonna have a ‘rasslin’ match.” said the Cowboy, smiling. “ Now yer makin’ me feel like Abe Lincoln or somethin’ ”

“ Sometimes just plain folks makes history, too.” said Leo.

Starway Moon looked up at them and smiled. “You know, Abe Lincoln used to be quite a wrestler, too, in his younger days.”

“Starway Moon, sometimes ah think you read too danged much.”

said Leo. “ Cowboy Bob Holiday, ah want you to meet mah new pollsters.

This is Mr. Shlick.”

A short, bespectacled gentleman with a wormy look to him nodded. He wore an immaculate gray suit and a thin black tie. The cowboy proffered his hand. The man’s handshake was cold and brusque.

“And this is Mr. Glibb.”

Mr. Glibb had a round red face like a ripe apple. His tall and portly body was also enclosed in a neat gray suit with a black necktie. His handshake was sweaty and limpid.

Glibb’s voice gasped: “We are men on a mission.”

Shlick added: “If you don’t know what you like, just look at our polls. Then you will know.”

Glibb added: “It’s the Great American way.”

Shlick continued: “You want to be on the right side, don’t you?”

“An’ we’re making history!” roared Leo the promoter. “Ah always said that pro-‘rasslin’ was jus’ a little old snapshot of America. Now we’ll be able to prove it. We’re usin’ the poles, jus’ lak them politicians do. Next thing ya know, the politicians will be watchin’ pro rasslin’ to find out what America is thinkin’. Ya know, someday we’ll have a ‘rassler elected governor somewhere. Or even president. Now where’s the Looney? I gotta introduce you guys to Lieutenant Landmine.”

The group wandered over too the other end of the dressing room. The cowboy got up and put on his ring jacket. He wandered over to the door, then left the dressing room and strolled along the hallway towards the entrance to the arena. He stood in silence, watching the women’s match in progress.

This was certainly one of the most unusual arenas that he had ever appeared in. It was really a giant indoor swimming complex. The wrestling ring was erected on floats across an Olympic size swimming pool. The pool was filled with water, and its turquoise tint dominated the scene. It became a sort of prop as the fans yelled to their favorites to dunk the bad guys in the pool.

Four girl wrestlers were flying around the ring, bouncing off the ring ropes and running across the ring, criss-crossing each other, barely missing. Looney Leduc and Lilly Limone were taking on the team of Tanya and the Lady Angel, Sonya’s unwitting host . Of course, the audience had no idea how much these last two hated each others’ guts.

Looney wore knee high black boots and a shiny black thong bathing suit, one that was

quite risqué in this era. Her face was painted like a devil. Lilly wore a shiny black suit, covered with silver stars. After all, as she always liked to remind people, she was the star of the act. Tanya wore red ring tights and boots, as befits a White Russian. Sonya, as usual, wore a shiny pink to match her bald head.

The Cowboy's mind wandered, as it so often did. He remembered back when he was in grade eight. One of his friends lived in an apartment building with a swimming pool. The scene in the ring reminded him of those days, horsing around with the girls, taking turns tossing each other into the water. He wondered whatever happened to that cute little girl Jo-Jo, who did cartwheels all the time. She would have made a great gal 'rasser. However, she probably turned into a legal secretary, or something dull like that. At least his life was not dull...

Suddenly he returned to the present. His attention was drawn back to the ring as Sonya missed the ropes and landed in the swimming pool with a great big KERSPLASH !

The audience roared with laughter.

Crawling back into the ring, the Lady Angel quickly found Looney and Lilly ganging up on her as the referee made Tanya go back to her own corner. She slipped about in their grasping hands like a greased pig. Finally, Lilly managed to flip the Angel and Looney sat on her chest for the pin.

As the referee counted, the Cowboy envied Sonya. As Looney sat on her chest, she must have had a great view of those glistening glutes !

Soon, the Lady Angel rushed by the Cowboy, dripping wet and still breathing heavy. Her wet arm brushed his, and he felt the cool water. It would be nice to go for a swim.

She muttered: "You're on next, Cowboy!"

And then he was on. He entered the ring to his music: "Ghost Riders in the Sky."

Noone in these times realized how ironically appropriate that music was, for there was a real ghost rider in the Cowboy: Paladin Lamb, C.S.I.S. agent from the year 2000 CE. Paladin wondered how many other time travelers might have wandered around in this era, unknown to those about them...

The Cowboy waved his white hat to the cheering crowd, leaving no doubt that he was the good guy.

As Lieutenant Landmine strode into the ring, the P.A. blared out the Marine Hymn. Just in case anyone had any doubt about his status, he was accompanied into the ring by Nick Knuckle, the top heel, smoking a cigar and looking mean.

The crowd booed him, just as they were supposed to.

Landmine stomped his foot down and raised a clenched fist into the air as the promoter looked on. The Bad guy bit was going great.

The Looney yelled at the crowd: "MAGGOTS!"

More boos and catcalls greeted him.

The wrestling match itself went pretty much as it was supposed to go. The climax came when the bulky body of the ex-marine flew through the air and splashed down in the swimming pool. Nick Knuckle then interfered, and got his man disqualified. Then he, too, went into the water, cigar and all. The crowd roared with laughter as he found his wet cigar had gone out, then threw it into the pool with disgust.

The crowd went home, contented that good had triumphed, at least in the main event. All was right again between earth and heaven.

Chapter Eight: The Six O'clock News

_____ You could always count on the good professor Pringle for a few words of wisdom, especially if free alcohol was involved. While Paladin Lamb had no intention of letting anybody hypnotize him, he realized that others were trying to arrange for hypnosis. Tanya's helpful hints on the subject were delivered with all the subtlety of a Siberian blizzard. Her fires were being fueled by the belief that it would make him a better lover. And when it come to sex, she was not a lady to be denied. She kept on about how the good professor was supposed to be some sort of expert on the subject. So Paladin figured he'd better check him out on hypnosis, just to see what Tanya was trying to get the cowboy into.

The good professor sat at a table in the bar room, dressed in a loud T-shirt with a purple, black and lime green floral design that reminded one of Hawaii at night and black slacks. His eyes lit up as the waitress placed a big jug of ale in front of him. His friends, Nick Knuckle and Lieutenant Landmine, went off to shoot some pool, leaving him alone with the cowboy.

Paladin, speaking through the lips of Cowboy Bob, could not help but wonder aloud:

"Nick Knuckle, the 'rasslin redneck, and the Looey seem an odd couple of guys for you to hang around with given your image as the "cool" scientist." He sipped a glass of milk.

The Professor slurped down half a glass of beer, belched, and said: "We got the same sort of roots. Like those guys, I'm sorta union made. I came from Newark, New Jersey. My dad was a dock worker, so somehow people nicknamed me "doc". When I became a professional wrestler, someone else was using the "doc" moniker, so I became " the good Professor", top bad guy. I really did go to college, on a football scholarship. Like Nick Knuckle, I was a lineman on the football team. That's where I met Nick. It was through him that I wound up getting into wrestling. It's a lot safer than football. There are a lot of crazy guys on the gridiron!"

He slurped the rest of his glass of beer down, and filled it up again from the jug. "In college I also studied psychology and became a hypnotist. I wanted to have something to fall back on when I got older. It still makes a good second job. I've done a lot of contract work using hypnosis."

A ruckus of sorts arose in the corner of the room.

"BIFF! BAM! POW!"

Looney Leduc and Lilly Limone were watching the bar's new color television set as the sixties' BATMAN series sprang into action. It seems hard to believe now, but back then, color TV was a great novelty. Like so many technical innovations, bars had color TV first. The girls were yelling out the words that flashed on the screen.

"ZOWIE! SOCK! PLOP!" Looney was jumping up and down with excitement, like the high school cheerleader she used to be after a touchdown. She jiggled as she did so. Paladin thought that she sure knew how to fill a pair of hot pants real good! He was starting to think a bit like the Cowboy at times.

"Interactive television! How educational!" said the Professor. He smiled:

"Good, healthy audience participation!"

"BIFF! POW! ZOWIE!" screamed the women, as if to answer him. They were having a ball.

The cowboy mused: "Lilly seems awful keen on her new tag team partner. Maybe that Looney really does have witchy friends."

"These are strange times, my friend. You've got to get more with it, man."

The Professor smiled, and took another gulp of beer. "That Batman ought to run for politics, he's

as clean cut as you are, Cowboy. Only how would he explain “Robin the Boy Wonder? Better call in the FBI They’re good at covering up that sort of thing.

Say, your attention seems to be wondering, Cowboy...”

“I’m watching Batman”, said Paladin as he stared at the television screen. Julie Newmar, dressed in a shiny black leotard, did the catwoman slink.

“That catwoman gets to me,” he said. “She’s such a PURRFECT pussycat.”

“She gets to a lot of men” said the good Professor. “Man, would I ever love to hypnotize her.”

“Hypnotize her?”

“Look man, you can even use hypnosis to seduce women. You give them a post-hypnotic suggestion to forget what happened, or to think they had slept with an angel. You could even have someone believing she was going to have a virgin birth. Haha.”

The cowboy smiled awkwardly at the joke, and sipped his glass of milk.

“ Listen, friend, Tanya spoke to me about you. You **can** trust me to help you through hypnosis. I’ve done contract work on army funded experiments to create a better soldier. I’ve even worked for the CIA. So you see, I’m government approved.”

“That’s good to know.” said the cowboy. He smiled and took another sip of milk.

Batman ended with a “ BIFF ! BAM ! POW ! ” and a comic tag.

“Holy catnip, that was good!” yelled Looney. She wore black hot pants and knee high shiny black boots. She slapped her boots and yelled: “Catwoman, I’m wearin’ yer boots, babe!”

“That Looney could be on Batman herself. Just look at her...” said the Professor.

“Sometimes I wish she’d dress a bit more conservatively, like the rest of us...Hey, check that credit!”

“Huh?” Cowboy Bob was still spaced out, looking at Looney’s booted legs. The Professor’s words brought him back to reality.

“That episode was written by George WaGGner...with two capital G’s in the middle of the name. Why, I’ll bet that’s old Gorgeous George himself. His real name was George Waggner. He was my forerunner with the blonde curly hair and the faggoty act. Haww! He really got them going in the old days!”

“Was he really...”

“Hell, he was as straight as I am. In those days, the real faggots hid themselves and came across as straight as J. Edgar Hoover!”

He caught the waitress’ eye and ordered another jug of beer. Lieutenant Landmine joined them now, He was all smiles. As he sat down, he said to the waitress:

“I’ll buy this round!” Then he added: “ It’s really on Nick Knuckle. I told ya the pool halls of Detroit can beat the pool halls of Chicago. I just proved it ! ”

In their corner, Looney and Lilly had calmed down and were now huddled, as if they were conspiring about something. “Probably just typical girl talk,” thought Paladin.

At the other end of the room, Nick Knuckle was trying to recoup his losses from another patron. He leaned over the pool table and got on with it.

The waitress brought another jug of beer. Landmine poured himself a drink, and passed the jug over to the Professor.

On the television set above the bar, a commercial smoothly led into the six o’clock news.

A film clip showed a ghetto burning in the riots following the Assassination of Martin Luther King earlier that year. Landmine snarled:

“We know how to deal with that sort of thing in DEE-troit.”

“Aww, come on!” said the Professor. “Last year you guys had the worse race riots ever.

The president had to send in the troops.”

“ But everything was quiet in Greek town. The Greek mafia is in charge there, and blackie knows enough to stay away. The mob knows how to run things real good. Now there’s law and order for you! The American way!”

“You really miss Detroit, don’t you?” said the Cowboy.

“It’s my hometown.” said the Looey. “I grew up there, with Jimmy Hoffa. Now there’s a real American hero for you ! ”

By now, the news had moved on to another subject. The television showed Bobby Kennedy surrounded by a mob of screaming women.

Next, Kennedy’s nasal voice, thick with his Boston accent, came over the TV as the screen showed flag-covered coffins being brought back from Viet Nam. “Which of these men might have taught a small child how to read? Which of them might have played in a World Series? Which of them might have found a cure for cancer?”

There was a poignant urgency in his voice, strong emotions tinged with a real concern.

Landmine snarled darkly: “That little rich boy. He’ll get his yet!”

“He handled Jimmy Hoffa pretty good.” said the Professor, tactlessly, “He put your big hero in jail!” He giggled.

Landmine leaned over and said quietly: “There’s a contract out on Kennedy. A big one, an open contract for anyone that’s interested.”

The Professor merely smiled and nodded.

Landmine went on: “But maybe it would be better if they didn’t kill him. Listen...” His voice grew hushed as he whispered to the others at the table: “Some of Jimmy Hoffa’s boys have tapes of Kennedy in bed with Marilyn Monroe. Juicy stuff with squeaky beds and that sort of thing.

There was a lot of heavy shit that went on back then. If that gets out, it’ll ruin him. That so called dream of his will die before he does.”

Landmine was getting a bit tight, and showing it. He gulped some more beer and said, loudly: “Hey guys, I propose a toast. ‘To Jimmy Hoffa, the all-American boy.’ ”

The other two raised their glasses and drank.

“Look at that, will you?” said the Professor, pointing at the television.

The screen displayed an ad for the British TV series, “The Avengers”.

Emma Peel, slim, agile, dressed in her own shiny black leotard and white Go G o boots, was doing a karate kick.

“This is the age of the boot.” said the Professor. “I’ll bet there are more shiny boots in America today than there were in Nazi Germany!”

Just then, the Black Baron of Germany entered the barroom, nodding curtly as he did so.

Tonight, he looked almost Latino, wearing a black tie and vest, white shirt, black leather pants, and a black Elvis wig. In that outfit, you would hardly recognize him as the bald teutonic terror of the ring. He led his current “sweetie” across the room. You would not recognize the Lady Angel, either. She wore a shiny white tank top, black leather miniskirt, and white Go Go boots. She also wore a black Betty Page style wig. They would have made a most elegant dance team – in the late 1950s.

They walked over to the Professor’s table. The Baron elegantly held back a chair for his lady, and she sat, demurely crossing her legs.

“Good Evening, friends.” He said formally. To look at him tonight, you’d hardly believe that this man was known privately, in his Wrestling troop, as “The Swedish Meatball.” He never

could find out who had first given him that nickname, but he figured it just had to be either the Professor or Starway Moon. They were the only ones that were mean-mouthed enough. If he ever did find out, he'd have to do something about it. So he was just as happy not to know. He also tried to pretend that he didn't know his nickname.

The Baron ordered a round, and sat down beside his "Betty Page girl". He leaned over to her and said, softly: "They say that the mannequins in store windows shed no tears. And they always get to wear the latest fashions. Did you ever think of becoming one?"

"It has always been my dream to become a mannequin, in the right store window." She sighed.

"I only wish I had the figure of one of those mannequins. Haha." The Professor joked.

Just then, Tanya's flaming red hair bounced into the room, distracting them briefly from their banter. She was escorting a short dark-skinned man who wore black slacks, a black turtleneck, and a black Fez decorated with a silver star and a crescent moon. His lips were curled in a deep scowl; his eyes were like burnt coals. Only one bit of color stood out from this dark figure. On his right arm, he wore a red arm band with a black Swastika set in a white circle.

"An Arab Nazi!" said the Betty Page girl. "Now I've seen everything."

"Liebchen, do not be surprised, for there are many Arab Nazis. In World War II, German emissaries were sent to the Middle East.. The people there were told that Hitler was a Muslim. In Egypt, they even showed people the house where Hitler's mother had lived. Today, there is an underground that still reveres the Ayatollah Adolph. Nazism is everywhere – even here in America!"

The Betty Page girl gushed: "That boy looks like a refugee from a Shriner's parade. Teehee..."

The Black Baron continued: "You know, the Waffen SS was a great International brotherhood. It still is. They had recruits from all over the world: Cossacks, Ukrainians, Spaniards, even Bosnians. They say old Heinrich Himmler winced when he saw the Bosnian SS officers, wearing the Fez above a black Deaths' Head SS uniform. Ha ! That must have been a sight to warm the cockles of your heart! Seeing the Reichsfuhrer sweat like that."

The Baron took a deep drink of his beer and swallowed. The Professor leaned over to him and said, in a voice the Cowboy had trouble hearing: "Man, the Tanya sure is a terrific talent scout. That boy is a great candidate. I have been working with him already!"

The Baron grinned: "She said the Arab boy has a great profile. She must have meant his background, because he isn't handsome."

"You're catching on." said the Professor. "We'll make a good conspirator out of you yet." He gulped some beer down and went on in a hushed voice, filled with evil glee like a schoolboy about to date the town nymphomaniac: "He has the PURRRFECT profile. He is a loner...isolated...without friends. His dreams of athletic success have just been shattered. It is so bad, the one girl he was friendly with ditched him, saying that she just can't live with his bitterness. Now he drifts in a mental fog, without even the light of a dream to guide him. So we'll give him the light of a new dream. Haha. Everyone needs to have a dream."

"That's where you come in ? Very good!" said the Baron, nodding. "Herr Professor, you really are a genius."

From across the room, Tanya beckoned to the Professor with her arm. The big man stood, bowing slightly to the others, and said: "Excuse me friends. Destiny calls."

He waddled across the room to join Tanya and her young and angry looking protégé. In the brief silence that followed the exit of the Professor, attention at the table returned to the color

TV over the bar. In those days, there was still something special about color TV for some...

Another scene lit up on the News. It was a film clip of some firemen hosing down a group of hippies in Vancouver, Canada. The hippies were dancing around, looking like children playing in the water from a fire hydrant in New York City. They seemed to be enjoying it all, as if it were some cosmic joke.

The Black Baron laughed. "Now that iss, as they put it, real cool! Hahaha. Give them kids a good bath. Maybe some day we'll really send them to the showers!"

The Betty Page girl smiled serenely: "Perhaps a new age is dawning."

Inside the Cowboy, Paladin Lamb recognized Sonya's irony in that remark.

The Baron did not. He went on, fulminating like an old conservative: "There iss nothing new about it. There was an experimental village set up in Switzerland, where they did all that before. Drugs, dreams, all that. Now the CIA have brought all that to America."

"The CIA?" asked the Cowboy.

"Ya! The CIA. You know what? I hear that CIA stands for Communist Intelligence Association. A friend in the FBI told me that."

"I didn't think "communist" and "intelligence" went together." said the Betty Page girl, sounding a bit too bright for the part she was playing.

The Baron was still too dense to notice her slip. He continued: "The CIA is behind everything that's going on. That's even where the good Professor's friend Dr. Timothy Leary got his start."

"The great Guru of LSD?" She asked.

"Ya! Leary started out as a contract employee for the CIA, just like the Professor did. Great slogan he coined: "Turn on! Tune in! Drop out! If everybody did that, how would you get any soldiers to send overseas?"

She said, dreamily: "I had a dream that someday, someone else will say that, only differently. 'Turn on without drugs, tune in to the universe, and drop out of straight society.'"

"Vat iss that you say, little mannequin? Sometimes you sound strange, like you could be from another planet or something."

Paladin, using the Cowboy's voice, dashed to the rescue: "Uh – I think she's still having acid flashbacks. Remember that party in Denver?"

"No, I don't."

"Oh, yeah, now I remember. You passed out before they gave out the drugs."

"Why didn't someone wake me up?"

The Black Baron sipped the beer. The others sighed with relief. Sonya's little slip had almost given the time travel bit away.

The Baron leaned towards her and said, softly: "Little mannequin, I have not seen your pedigree, but you do look like you are really of good Aryan stock. Just between us, I have made a long study of Jewish-Bolshevik decadence in the bedroom."

"And now you want to try it out yourself?" she snapped.

"But only with a good clean German girl!"

Paladin Lamb closed his eyes and said a silent prayer: "Well, Old Friend, you've plopped me into quite a stew pot here. There's Swedish meatballs and red neck Teamsters and Arab Nazis. What's next?"

Chapter Nine: "In the Cult of the Conqueror Worm"

" It doesn't matter if you don't understand it. I just need you to be there. We need your male energy, your vibrations. Don't worry, when a man has nice buns like you do, he doesn't need to know anything!"

The Cowboy sat in the passenger seat. Tanya, already in the driver's seat, turned the ignition key. The engine roared into action like some wild beast. The dark red muscle car glided smoothly out from the curb and into traffic.

Tanya took pleasure in such cruel put - downs, acting like a Texas Oil billionaire with a twenty year old secretary. That sort of treatment always went unanswered. Paladin felt sorry for the Cowboy, who had to live with this all the time. Still, the ghost rider from the future let the Cowboy follow her.

Tanya the Terrible did make him feel like some pet dog. Maybe the Cowboy's other girl friend, Leapin' Lynda Liberty, could change all that when she got back from Japan.

"It's all about polarity." Tanya said as she drove them out into the poor part of town. " Like you wont understand this none, but they say everything is electric in the spirit world. Like electricity, there's a plus and a minus. In our little group, we've discovered that having an equal number of men and women helps to set up that polarity. Just like electricity, we need polarity so a current will flow.

It's really the same current the Pentecostals get going when they bark the devil up a tree, only they do not understand what they are doing.

In old mother Russia, our father Grigory Rasputin used the same principles in his holy meetings in the winter forest. He learned these things at home in Siberia, from wise men who had fled Tibet. People don't need to understand it. They just need to do it. It's the energy that counts. An', Cowboy, you got lots of macho energy! Here we are..."

She pulled into a half-full parking lot located behind a dilapidated old building that had once been a movie theater. The marquee proclaimed " Revival Meetings ". It didn't advertise what they were supposed to be reviving.

The couple got out of the car. The car doors slammed. Their footsteps grated on the gravel of the parking lot. They walked over to a dark maroon colored door at the back of the building. Tanya got a key from her purse and opened it.

They were greeted by Lilly, who wore plain white sandals with straps. Lilly greeted Tanya with a curtsy. Tanya curtsied back.

"Cowboy Bob, meet sister Lilith. She's a newcomer. So we have given her a new name. She is no longer the Lilly Pad, as we used to call her, she is now Lilith, named after the first wife of Adam. The one that wanted to get on top."

"Thank you for giving me such an honored name, Mistress Tanya."

"Why is it so honored, sister?" Tanya asked.

Lilly replied like a child repeating a catechism: "Because Lilith came first, before Eve even was thought of. Lilith liked to get on top when making love. When the Great Demiurge saw that, she was cast out of Eden and another was created to take her place.

Since then, she stalks the dark places of the earth, seeking revenge on the seed of Adam. She steals the semen of boys who masturbate and uses it to give birth to demons. We honour Lilith as one of the greatest of rebels of the right wing, for she is the mother of ambition."

"So for this grand old dame, we've given her a real neat name ! " It was Looney Leduc speaking, still wearing her hot pants and her high black boots. It made Paladin Lamb wonder: How many of this little troop of wrestlers were in this strange cult ?

"Late again, as usual ?" It was the Professor, stepping up to them from behind Looney Leduc. He was wearing a dark red robe. He smiled serenely, and added: "Who do you think you are,

anyway? Marilyn Monroe?"

"You never know." Tanya smiled sweetly back at him. "Someday she might come back to seek revenge."

"Her old flame will soon return to the city where her dreams were burned."

Once again, the Professor smiled. He turned and walked over to a cloak room and opened a door to reveal several red robes hanging in a row.

"Best get into your robes. The spirits are getting restless waiting."

The Professor looked at "Lilith" the newcomer, and added, for her benefit:

"On the other side, they run a parallel ceremony at the same time as ours. It is sort of like a mirror image. The two together are stronger."

"So be it, master Paul." said Lilith, with the innocent excitement of a pubescent virgin at a biker party.

Tanya took her by the arm, and said, softly:

"We all have shadows. We should look more closely at them. From the shadow, we can learn the shape of the ground beneath us, and the direction of the sun above.. So study your shadow."

"When do we get into the good stuff, like the 'kiss of infamy' and all that?" said 'Lilith', enthusiastically.

The Professor smiled again, like a priest welcoming a new orphan into a boy's home: "That will come in due time. Now let's get our gowns on. If we are not robed, the spirits will not listen to us."

They quickly donned their robes and silently entered a large room that was lit by a thousand candles that were reflected by walls of mirrors. The room felt cold, like a graveyard on New Year's Eve. The scent of incense was everywhere. Others were already there, also in robes, kneeling on the floor. At one end of the room an altar stood, stark in the otherwise bare room. On the altar, a lava lamp glowed. It looked as if a red worm were slowly turning 'round in a yellow liquid, slithering about in its glass prison..

Tanya and the Professor went and stood at either side of the altar.

The fiery redhead raised her arms slowly, spreading them wide as if to hug the sky. She spoke in a voice filled with emotion: "Embrace the energy of the Universe."

The others all followed her lead, standing and spreading their arms wide. Then they followed her lead as she slowly closed her arms over her head, bringing her fingertips together. Then she slowly lowered her hands, passing a ball of energy in front of her body. The others did this as well. Instantly, you could feel a charge of electricity in the air.

Tanya's voice sang out, slowly, softly :

"Breathe in. Slowly. Fill the tan tien with energy. Then let the solar plexis come to life...and next, the heart. Now, fill the third eye with your breath. Then let it reach the crown of your head. Let your skull fill with clouds of energy. And let that energy rain down over your body as a shower of light."

They did this three times, and then stood silently. Her voice sang put to shatter the silence:

"Chant for purification, chant for meditation..."

And, as a group, they chanted: "The time of burning is long gone. Now the time of turning's coming on. Breath is life and life is breath."

"So breath deep," the Professor continued in a deep and forceful voice:

"Breathe deep and slow. Pull the air deep down into your belly, then your chest, and then your back. Deep and slow...Now, as if you have been struck by lightning, now, force it out ! Let your spirit ride on that breath like the witches of old riding their brooms. Now, relax...let the air fill the vacuum of your lungs."

Tanya spoke, slowly:

“Repeat the process as you hear me now. Knowing the point of turning is growing. Where inhaling becomes exhaling, where the sky meets the sea. That is the point of turning, the portal of eternity. Turning eternally.”

The congregation sat on the floor in *sesie*, the Japanese position from which one can commit *hari kari*. Now, only Tanya remained on her feet. Her voice rang out:

“ Look at yonder wiggling worm, turning, squirming, like unto life itself. That red worm is like the Spirit of Mankind trapped within the body. Someday, it will be free. The worms shall set it free. Think about the worms of the world.”

She gave the Cowboy a sexy look, and continued with her incantation.

“Think of the worms inside you. There are good worms and bad worms and good germs and bad germs. Each does its part. You eat worms when you eat meat, and someday, worms will eat you. It’s all a part of nature. Why do you fear the worm? Welcome that fear, embrace it. Beyond that fear lies freedom.”

Let us chant, for chanting can open the portals of eternity.

“Aquerra Goyte, Aquerra Beyte, Aquerra Goyte, Aquerra Beyte...”

She led, in a musical tone that seemed to reflect ages so long past that only our souls can reach back that far. The others joined in the chant.

“Aquerra Goyte, Aquerra Beyte, Aquerra Goyte, Aquerra Beyte”

“Kyrieie Eeeeh Llee-son, Christie Eeehlee-son, Kyrieie eeeeLlee son!

“Kyrieie Eeeeh Llee-don, Christie Eeeh lee son, Kyrieie eeeLlee son!”

The chanting went on, slowly and lyrically, for several minutes.

Then Tanya brought her hands together in prayer. She spoke in a deep and solemn voice: “Welcome the shadows of this world that make the light stand out.”

The group intoned words known by heart, their voices reminding one of a graveyard at midnight:

“Welcome the shadows of the world that make the light stand out.”

“Hail to the Spear that draws the healing blood of Christ.”

“Hail to the Spear that draws the Healing Blood of Christ!”

“ Welcome the night that lights the Spirit World!”

“ Welcome the night that lights the Spirit World!”

Now she paused, and then spoke as a minister would, delivering a sermon.

“Just as you have worms in your bowels, so does our mother earth. In the dark depths of the ocean, so deep that sunlight never reaches there, there are giant worms. Modern diving spheres have found them. Their energy, their life, comes from the hidden sun within the earth, the molten core that lies beneath us. They live and thrive without the sun. Think on that. There is life without the sun. Life that thrives in eternal darkness.”

Chapter Ten: “The Morning After the Morning After”

“You had quite a dose of the dark side. Come, I will help you to recover.”

The Lady Angel wore a pale blue nightgown, and navy blue clogs. She was bareheaded. Her bald scalp glistened as she put a record on an old turntable. Antiques ! Even in Paladin Lamb’s day, such vinyl discs had become antiques...

Soft flutes evoked the very voice of nature. She turned and smiled at him: “Vinyl discs. It’s really interesting what you find in the stores in this age. So this is how the ancients played music in their homes, without using a computer to do it! How primitive! How delightfully primitive!”

She stood by the window, bathed in sunlight.

As Paladin, in charge of the Cowboy’s body, looked at her, his head hurt, and he felt all cold and moldy inside, as if he were starting to rot.

“Come over here.” She said, smiling at him. “I’ll help you get over it.”

He went slowly over to her. His muscles felt stiff.

“Here, stand in the sun.”

He did so.

“Let its warm rays embrace you. There, that’s it. Close your eyes. Let the energy of the sun bathe your face in light. Now enter into the breath.”

He began to enter into the breath, breathing deeply, beginning Chi Kung reverse breathing. Somehow, he knew instinctively that he must reach out to the light side of the Force. Whatever dark life forms there may be, we are children of the sun.

She continued, her voice as soft as silk:

“Keep your eyes closed as the sun sweeps over you. Watch the bright red colors of your eyelids. Stare into that strange red and mauve world that you can see now your eyes are closed. Imagine that the color is growing, growing, until you are floating in a sea of violet light. Now you have become a wave on the surface of that sea. You become a wave of light.”

She fell silent for awhile, letting the music caress him. Then she went on:

“ You are a wave of light, riding in top of an ocean of light. Feel the vast ocean beneath you, feel the sustaining warmth the waters of light. Draw power from the wind, and dance in showers of sunlight...”

The moldy feeling left him. His mind cleared, like a drunk in recovery. Yes, his mind came clearer now...and with that, his memory came back.

Yes, it had been quite a meeting in the temple of darkness. At the end of it, he’d drunk the bitter waters of forgetfulness. Now he remembered. It had been a lot more interesting than the P.T.A. Even the one in Harper Valley, where the Republicans lived. The celebrants had moved into a slow dance, whirling about to strange music, until they had dropped with exhaustion. All the while a thousand candles flickered. The ceremony climaxed with something called the elevation of the worm. But now, whatever that strange energy was, it was out of his system.

Then he slept, a sleep so deep that dreams could not penetrate down to that level of consciousness. He slept for a day, and through the next night, too. Now it was the morning after the morning after, and he slowly rose from the bed.

For now, Paldin Lamb left the Cowboy in charge of their shared body, and merely watched silently.

Was it morning, or night ? He had no idea. He looked at his watch. It said “ten o’clock.” There was light coming in the window. That means it must be morning.

Unshaved, the cowboy went for breakfast in the restaurant of the hotel where he was staying.

He ordered coffee, bacon, and two eggs sunny side up. Soon, yellow yolk bedecked brown toast, and he enjoyed the taste of breakfast. He let the act of eating consume him, until

there was nothing else going on in his mental world, only eating. He used to do that with running. Think about the running until you, yourself, become the act of running. He didn't know quite why he was doing that now, with eating, but...

Paladin Lamb, the ghost rider, knew why. Such tantric exercises brought one closer to the flow of cosmic energy. In a pinch, he might need to draw on that energy. He also knew now that he was not the only wizard in the castle. So now, he had his slow, unwitting host do things that would help to raise his consciousness as well. Then all the cells of his body could become vehicles of cosmic energy, if that sort of thing should prove positively indispensable.

"Hi, Cowboy." The Lady Angel sat down beside him, wearing a blonde wig and a white dress. Her complexion has a fresh shine to it. A wink told him that Sonya Savage was in charge of the Lady Angel's body, as she usually was.

"You look energetic today, partner." said Paladin Lamb, now taking over his host's body completely. Afterwards, the Cowboy would simply have no recollection of these events, since the tape was not being recorded on his machine.

"I spent the last night with the Black Baron of Germany."

"Enjoy yourself?"

"Sometimes this gal needs a good grovel just to get a bit of my masochism out of my system. I'm beginning to enjoy this assignment."

"What did you learn about the Baron?"

"He's a real old fashioned gentleman. He loves a girl who grovels good. Last night we played a favorite game of his called "Arab slave girl". (She laughed nervously.) It's sort of like spin the bottle. You wouldn't believe that places where he's wearing my lipstick stains."

"Enjoy yourself?" Paladin raised an amused eyebrow.

"Oh, it was a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there."

"Is he one of the New Gang of Four?"

"I'm pretty sure he is. Back in the year 3033 CE, Angel de Vladd also liked to play a game called "Arab slave girl." One of the Green girlies had begun to infiltrate his reactionary circle, and she was able to get some reports to us. She was not a follower of Herr Von Masoch, so the whole business disgusted her. That disgust gave her away, and he killed her in a sword fight. But his little game is sort of like a fingerprint, a psychological fingerprint that gives him away even in another body and another time."

"He was quite a swordsman in your day? That is to say, he will be quite a swordsman." Paladin ate some more egg.

"He's dangerous in this day, too. He carries a collapsible sword and a dagger in his suitcase. He showed me some renaissance fencing moves last night, and then teased me up a bit with his blade. It actually got kinda scary. I didn't want to be that Arabic."

"I have made a study of oriental sword fighting techniques."

"I know. And so have I. Paladin Lamb, this one is mine. I have got a score to settle for my sister in the Green Girlies."

"Sonya, the way you're going, you're going to have a quarrel with the whole world."

"You're right. I'm shapin' up for a shootin' match with the year 1968 ! "

"It was a turning point in time. Even in my day, we can see that."

"So what have you found out, Paladin Lamb?"

He was startled to hear his own name spoken.

"You'd best be careful, Sonya, or you'll give yourself away."

"Don't be silly, sweetie. They'll never guess that Time Travelers from the future walk among them. If they do notice anything, they'll put us down as aliens. Or angels...(She preened herself) Of course, the women of my era are angelic."

"So were Satan and his gang of fallen angels." He returned to his eggs.

“ So, Paladin...they call you Pal, sometimes, don't they? Well, pally, you were on to something before that ceremony, weren't you ? ”

“ I was looking for Anastasia Fast first. She's the most versatile of the gang of four, so she may be our most dangerous opponent. ” He dabbed some more toast in the yellow of an egg. “ I think Anastasia may be the yolk at the center of the egg. I don't know why. Just a hunch.”

“Have you located Anastasia, then?”

“I've narrowed my search down to two people.”

“Which two?”

“The Professor, and Starway Moon.”

“ They are both a bit strange.”

He ate his yellow dripping toast and nodded.

“But which one is the hiding place chosen by Anastasia?”

“ I'll have to watch them both.”

The Cowboy's body ate some toast and egg.

Sonya smiled and said: “Say, what if Anastasia is hiding in Tanya the Terrible? ”

The Cowboy's body choked on his toast.

“Wouldn't a frustrated transsexual just love to take over the body of a beautiful nymphomaniac?”

Paladin Lamb answered: “You've got a good point there. She really could be anywhere...”

“It's the same with Devi Lllina. But I think I can narrow the field a bit. ”

“How so?” said he.

“She's either in Lilly or she's Looney and I just can't tell which witch she's hiding in. I'm pretty sure she's in one of them, the sly devil. Either way, she's free to be a witch, which is what she's always wanted to be.”

“ So we've got a lead on three of the New Gang of Four. What about the fourth ? What about Jo Ho?”

“The elusive loner?”

Paladin shrugged: “Where would an elusive loner choose to hide?”

“In another elusive loner ?”

“Gee, you know, that makes sense.” Said Paladin Lamb. “Sort of sense. So he can isolate in this time period, too.”

“ Like another psychological fingerprint. So check out that Polish giant. He's so cold he makes the winter ice look warm.”

Paladin Lamb went back to eating what was left of his eggs.

Chapter Eleven: ...Across the Years

Paladin Lamb was rapidly falling in love with a woman whose body he had never seen. He had only seen her in the borrowed body she was using in this time. Even when doing Astral travel in these times, she resembled the earthly body she had usurped. So what did his strange, untimely lover really look like ?

“Hey, Pal! Come see this on the T.V.”

Sonya's sometimes shrill voice was filled with excitement.

“It's Muhammed Ali!”

She turned up the T.V. They heard the historic words repeated: “ I aint got no quarrel with them Vietcong.”

He entered the room. Sonya knelt in lotus position before the television. Bald and beautiful, she was wearing a saffron robe. She could have been a Buddhist nun.

On the black and white screen, Ali was young and handsome. His strident voice went on: “I either have to obey the laws of the land or the laws of Allah. I have nothing to lose by standing up and following my beliefs. We've been in jail for four hundred years.”

Next, there was a clip of Muhammed Ali surrounded by a mob of black Muslim men, who all looked angry. He was wearing a Fez, identifying him as a part of the Black Muslim movement.

It turned out that these excerpts were part of a film clip advertising an upcoming documentary on the Nation of Islam, commonly known in those days as the Black Muslims.

Sonya smiled sadly at Paladin as she sighed: “These were dark times. It is only a year ago that they stripped Ali of his boxing championship. They couldn't beat him in the ring, so they tried to beat him in the boardroom.”

“ Sonya, in your days, do they still talk of Muhammed Ali? ”

“ Yes. Even in the year 3033, he is a hero, one of the surviving symbols of your century, along with Marilyn Monroe, the icon of sexuality. Her photos embody glamour while his embody strength : Yin and Yang symbols of the twentieth century.

We remember Ali in later life when he became quite a mystic. After his death, poetry and myth elevated him still further, until he became an icon of sorts, celebrating the seeds of spirituality that were growing, even in the dung of your materialism. A great poem, called ‘Pilgrimage in a Strange World ’, will tell ‘the other side of the story of Muhammed Ali.’ That poem repeats the legend that grew up in the 21st century that a great Shaolin priest had agreed to be reincarnated as a black American in order to spread a message of spirituality to a materialistic world. That almost Avatar became Muhammed Ali, the boxer. His whole life became a sermon on the subject of spirituality. It is really something to see him on T.V., the man behind the myth.”

On the television screen, a film clip showed Muhammed Ali's flash knockout of Sonny Liston in Lewiston Maine that had occurred just a few years earlier. Seeing that, Sonya said: “Look at that, will you? There's proof of the legend. Ali had no martial arts training in the life of this world, but he just used an advanced technique. He was able to use mystic energies there that he had learned to master in a previous lifetime, in a Shaolin temple.”

There came another clip of Ali on the T.V., eyes bulging, mouth gaping wide, proudly proclaiming: “I am the greatest.” He said. “And you, Sonny Liston, You just a big ugly bear. I'm gonna do some bear baitin'! Just you see. You wanna got at it right now? Let's go, Big Ugly Bear! Right now!”

Sonya smiled again: “What a genius! Feigned madness! Like something out of Drunken

Monkey Kung Fu! Somehow, ordinary people like Sonny Liston fear the insane more than they do the wicked. See how Ali would beat his opponents from the inside out ! First, he beat them inside their minds, and then he beat their brains out. Now, that did take the wisdom of a Shaolin priest. Admit it. Come on Paladin Lamb,” she said playfully, “Admit my legend is true.”

Smiling, she assumed a preying mantis pose, as if to strike at him. Imitating Ali, she made her eyes bulge out of her head, and said: “I am the greatest!” She danced around and threw a couple of Axe kicks in the air, teasing him. “Come on, Paladin Lamb, Admit it, I’ve got you psyched! You’ve been mine ever since I saved you from that elevated worm!”

She danced around him, shadow boxing.

“ So shall I call you ‘Sunny’ ? Sunshine sounds so formal.”

She dropped the martial arts pose and embraced Paladin’s Cowboy body. Happily, he hugged her back. They seemed to meld together into a single energy.

Deep black and purple music, ominous music, came from the television set as the regularly scheduled program came on. Big, black suited, and burly like a bear, Raymond Burr lumbered into a courtroom as Perry Mason. In those days, he was the very embodiment of the legal profession. The tension in the music rose, a fact that went unnoticed as they embraced, like a trigger being pulled back slowly...

Suddenly, Sonya and Paladin were hurtling together through a long black tunnel towards a blinding white light. Then, just as suddenly, they were in a room. It looked like an athletic dressing room of some sort, with shiny lockers and clean, varnished benches.

They were surrounded by semi-naked women, bald women ! They were together, inside someone’s body, looking out. The women looked at them, like an audience watching a performance. They chirped encouragement, like so many wild birds. Then they fell silent. Flute music mimicked them, after they had fallen silent. Paladin felt the strange body that they were in undulating slowly in response to the unworldly music.

He now found that he could communicate telepathically with Sonya. He thought to her: “What are we doing here?”

“ It looks like we’re doing belly.”

“Ballet ?”

“ No. Belly, silly. Belly dancing. We’re belly dancing for the girls, for the Green girlies. They are screeching to greet us.”

“ Sounds like wild birds chirping.”

“ So it does. As it was in the beginning so it is in my times. Belly dancing began as dance done by women, and for women. That is how it would wind up in the later times, too. It looks like we’re having a flash forward. We are in my future body, together. We’ve melded together and gone back to my times. It’s like an other dimensional thunderstorm in the fabric of time. We’ll just have to ride it out.”

“Oh, great. I thought I’d tried everything.”

“ Guess again, Pal. You know, if you lived in my age you could even have children. Well, you pride yourself on craving new experiences, so just relax and enjoy while I do a belly dance for the girls! ”

“ Gee...I never thought I’d wind up inside my lover’s body, doing a belly dance for her girlfriends. That’s a little weird, even for me.”

And so he shared the feeling of her future body, doing belly dance. Her bare feet were rooted into the ground. Her slowly undulating hips were like an oil pump, drawing energy from the earth mother below.

Now steady drum beats gave a savage rhythm to it all as she stepped out slowly. She picked up a cane and used it as a prop. She held it out like an archer's bow, and slowly drew back on an imaginary string. A make - believe arrow fired into nothingness. Then the music stopped. She waved her hand and bowed her head to close the dance. Once again, there came the sound of bird - like chirping as the room filled with the strange cheers of her companions.

Paladin felt as though he had been transported to another planet. He was about to discover that he was nearly right in feeling that way. The future earth he was about to see was, well, a very DIFFERENT place.

“Way to go, girlie!” said one of the sisterhood. “You’ll soon win your black panties!”

“Black panties?” Paladin’s thoughts raised a mental eyebrow.

In some indescribable way, your thoughts can do the same sort of expressions as your face when you are telepathing someone. In other dimensions, the telepath tool is used as often as the telephone is on the earth plane, and even more easily. After all, you need physical equipment for a telephone. All you need for telepathy is your own little mind, as long as you know how to use it.

“Yeah.” growled Sonya, mentally. “Black panties. Just like in your day martial artists would go after a black belt. First comes the red, then green, blue, brown and so forth ‘til it’s a black belt you’re after. Well, I belong to a secret order of REAL Women that began way back in the twentieth century. We are called the Sisters of Ishtar. We practice the marital arts.

WE show our rank in the secret sisterhood by the color of our panties. First there are the white panties, and so on, until we get to blue, brown, and, at last, the black panties. When a woman has won her black panties, it means that she is pretty proficient at all sorts of neat things. A lot of us Green Girlies are also in the Sisterhood. We find that the skills we learn there are helpful in doing undercover work. And besides, it’s a lot of fun qualifying for your black panties.

You’ll have to try it sometime, Paladin Lamb. We do have men who win their black panties.”

“Uh, thanks, Sonya, I think I’ll just take your word that it’s fun.”

“Any more questions?”

“Yes. How do I get home?”

“We’ll just have to ride this flash forward out. Don’t worry, be happy.”

Another voice rang out: “Princess, you do the pentagram proud!”

“The Pentagon? In this era?” Now Paladin really raised a mental eyebrow.

“Don’t you ancients know anything?” Sonya giggled. “The Pentagon is the symbol of our sisterhood. Whatever our rank in the outside world, we’re all equal when we meet on the Pentagon.”

“I guess I’m too square to realize that.” Paladin shrugged mentally. “I should have known.”

“You should have. Our secret women’s networking groups began in your days. We were all around you, unnoticed by the male chauvinist types who thought they were running things. Even Clinton had his Monika to look after him. Until the Star Chamber caught up with her.”

Just then, another woman entered the room to cries of “ATTENSHUN!” She wore the dark evergreen ghi that was the standard uniform of the Green Girlies. On the left of her chest was a fiery orange cross in the style of the ancient Knights Templar, indicating her higher rank.

“Form a shrake, girlies! The jury verdict is coming in.”

A gaggle of geese becomes a shrike when it is in flight. The command was clear: SHAPE UP. The girlies hurriedly got dressed. Each was donning an evergreen ghi, marked only by a silver Templar cross in the left chest. In the green girlies, they were all the same rank. But Paladin could not help but notice the many colored panties denoting different rank in the secret order. He looked down and noticed that the panties that Sonya was putting on were a golden brown. So she had her brown panties! Soon she would win her black panties. Paladin was impressed.

The high tech green ghis were quickly donned, and many tiny feet were just as quickly stuffed into leather boots that were a sort of German Evergreen color. Brusk footsteps followed as they quickly filed from the room.

In silence, The Green girlies walked down a long corridor and boarded a silver subway train. Inside the single head they now shared, Sonya explained a few things about her world to the ever quizzical Paladin Lamb. She spoke, as always, telepathically.

“ In our world of 3000 C.E., the buildings are all underground, just like our trains. The movement to go underground began about 800 years ago because of the pollution and the vanishing ozone layer produced by twentieth century greed. The surface was becoming too dangerous for habitation. In time, people saw the wisdom of their new way of life, as the forest reclaimed the surface of the planet up above them. Now, where oil-dripped roadways used to run, the world is filled with solar generators and windmills and bicycle paths. Everywhere, the color green prevails. We can go again to the surface, and restore our souls in green pastures and lie by still waters once again. This time, we are careful not to interfere with the world as it was created for us. Many of us feel it is like having returned to the Garden of Eden.”

Once they entered the subway car, they sat down behind a small computer console. There was such a device at every seat. As the train pulled out of the Green Girlie's station, the consoles all came on. They were operating like ancient television sets tuned to the News channel. Sonya gasped at the face on the screen. Platinum hair crowned pale and beautiful skin, blue eyes and ruby red lips. Paladin thought she looked just like Marilyn Monroe, but it couldn't be. Not here. Not Now.

“ It's Anastasia Fast.” said Sonya. “A leader of the New Gang of Four.” The camera moved back to reveal a well curved figure wearing a dress of many colors. She was indeed the spitting image of the 20th century movie icon. She even exuded the same star quality. Her very bearing seemed to say: “ I am such stuff as stars are made of, and you can find me in your dreams.”

Sonya put on her earphones and turned the sound up. Anastasia was talking in the breathless way she had of talking, about the original Marilyn Monroe. You see, over the centuries, there had been many other Marilyn Monroes, just as many Romans took the name of Caesar. But it had all begun with a lonely star crossed woman back in the twentieth century.

“ She was SO - OO much more than just a great actress. Even in the midst of many, she was a loner. She stood out from the crowd. She became an icon. She stood for people's dreams. I've spent a lifetime studying her.

She was the essence, the very soul of glamour! A real life Barbie doll. And I always wanted to be Barbie!”

“ So you have Barbie dolls, too ? ”

“ Our Barbie 3033 dolls talk back. They even argue about the important issues of the day, like fashion.” said Sonya, silently.

On the screen, Anastasia's breathless voice went on:

“You know, some of the legends are true. Like, one day Marilyn the First was out

walking with a friend, her platinum hair covered by a dark green kerchief. They went about unnoticed, walking through a crowd near a grocery store. All of a sudden, Marilyn turned to her friend and said: 'Do you want to see me be HER?' She took off her kerchief and let some sort of inner magic shine forth. She was bathed in some sort of inner light. Suddenly, she drew all attention to her, as if someone had turned an invisible spotlight on her. She could use all the empty hunger of her forelorn youth to draw people to her like a magnet. Her great yin energy just sucked people in. Even now, a thousand years later, she shines forth like the morning star that ushers in the coming day. Alone in the dark blue sky, she seems to chase the crescent moon, but never catches it."

Sonya was startled as a hand plucked the earphones off her head, and a soft voice said: "Marilyn Monroe was horribly murdered by the mafia, but even now, a thousand years past her death, Anastasia Fast still wants to be her. No accounting for taste."

The soft voice belonged to Sonya's friend Opal Lightning. Opal got her name from her birthstone, and from an Arabic legend. It is said that the jewels known as opals come from the fingertips of lightning bolts. Opal's dark blue eyes twinkled with just a bit of mischief.

"Ever wish you could be Marilyn Monroe, too ? "

"The woman, or the icon?"

"Either one."

"I'd love to be the icon."

"Maybe you can be. I just got a notice on my Bellydance e-mail that there is a convention of Marilyn mannequins coming up in July. You can go to it, and you can all be Marilyn Monroe together. Like a thousand clones of the same sex goddess in the same hotel. Interested?"

"Now that's really being one of the girls!" Sonya smiled serenely. "Nothing's as much fun as being a mass production model of Marilyn Monroe for awhile. "

Opal put the earphones back on her friend and sat down nearby.

On the screen, the interview continued. The camera moved back to reveal the woman doing the interview. She had olive skin and long black hair. She, too, had bright red lips. A black beauty mark in the form of a five pointed star graced her cheek. She wore a black dress and a white necklace made of cats' bones and teeth. She held up the microphone and Anastasia continued cooing into it, like a latter day dove.

"Oh, me? Little old me? How did my persona begin? The beginning was in the beginning. I have been being a girl, girling up, as they say, all my life. As a toddler, I dressed in my mother's clothes. She thought I was cute, so she bought me some little girls' clothes that really fit. I had dolls and doll houses and a purse. I even had my own lipstick! My mom dyed her hair blonde, so she dyed my hair blonde as well. Those were the days! I didn't even know that I was different back then. I hated to think of playing with 'dirty boys'. They were always SO - OO ROUGH!

When I got older and I learned more about life, I wish I hadn't. Now I had to do my things, to live my real life, in secret. As puberty began to ravish me, I used to rub my chest trying to develop breasts. I didn't want the other things. How I longed to be nice and SMOOTH BETWEEN THE LEGS! But the cruel gods of nature had decreed otherwise. Now they won't let the surgeon's knife correct the mistakes of nature. They say I'm too unstable. Hmmpf! Do I look unstable to you?"

"No more unstable than oil and fire. "

"That combination used to run the world."

"I know, in the good old days. Back then, they had REAL CALIFORNIA EVIL, too. Like the hit song said, 'California Evil, on such a summer's day !'"

As the interview went on, Sonya glanced about the subway car. It was filled with her sister Green Girlies. Some were standing in the aisles, raising trembling arms in the slow movements of Big Wild Goose Qigong.

Sonya intuited to Paladin, telepathically: “The Wild Goose, the Canada Goose, is a special symbol for us Green Girlies. We learn from them. For instance, did you know that geese take turns as leaders in flight, so no one gets too tired? Rotation of leadership comes from nature herself, from the flight of wild geese. When one is hurt, two others drop out of formation and stay with their sister goose ‘til she get better, or dies. It’s like our old motto, ‘Semper Fi ! ’ But we’ve gone one better than the ancient armies that invented our motto. Using telepathy, we can share each others senses.’ That is why they say it is as if we had eyes in the back of our heads just like ancient Chinese soldiers. WE do. We have each others’ eyes.”

The interview on the computer module continued as Anastasia Fast said, sadly:

“As a teenager, dating was OK. I could always relate well with girls since I was one myself. Psychologically, anyway. The only problem was, I’d get jealous of their pretty outfits. I’d want to rip their clothes off them and put them on me. Then, one night, I did just that. I couldn’t stand it any more. So I took the girl’s clothes right off her and put them on! Can you believe it !! She just stood there, screaming at me. That’s how I came out! I do so love the electric feel of pantyhose. They just make me glow all over.”

“ Any final words ? ”

At that point, Anastasia Fast burst into tears.

“Why me? Why me? Others have gone over, and had their sex changes. They say I’m unstable. Do I sound unstable to you? They refuse to free me from the curse of masculinity. I’ll make them pay. I don’t know how I’ll do it, but I’ll make them pay for what they’ve done to me!”

On the screen, the picture froze into a still photograph. The smiling face of the hostess contrasted vividly with the crying visage of her guest, like the ancient twin masks of theater.

A voice came on the monitor: “Boy, that hostess could sure open them up pretty good. She was better than Jill the Ripper!”

A voice over came on now, in a matter of fact manner:

“ That was the last interview between newscaster and Show host Devi Llina and the stage performer Anastasia Fast, filmed a month ago. Both disappeared mysteriously shortly afterwards. The only clue was an abandoned car and an old book belonging to Devi Llina. Something entitled the Necromicon.

The search for them continues in the woods of Northern Minnesota. Police have not ruled out foul play.”

Not publicly, at least. The less the public knew about the New Gang of Four, the better.

Chapter Twelve: Trial's End

“ The California murder trial of the self-styled ‘New Caudillo’ continues as watchers anxiously await the jury verdict, expected sometime later today. In a move that revived memories of the dark ages of the ancient American justice system, his Spanish speaking lawyer ‘played the race card’ several times before his all Hispanic jury. Tension is high among the white minority in California, who fear violence from the Hispanic majority there. In contrast to the ancient ways of long ago days, Modern California is 75 per cent Hispanic, and is regarded internationally as one of the most civilized states in the U.S.A.”.

The news continued on the computer module. The screen showed film of a tall gaunt man with a broad - brimmed hat and a handlebar mustache. He wore a Spanish “Zorro” type costume. He was walking towards a big silver saucer-shaped building, accompanied by a small white haired man in a plain gray suit. Nervously, the new “Zorro” flashed a shark - like smile as he walked by the camera.

The T.V. news announcer continued, voice over: “The trial of the accused cop killer known in the press as “Vladd the Impaler” concluded this week. An - Hell de Vladd, who calls himself the New Caudillo after the Fascist General Franco of 20th century Spain, is the leader of the Spanish rebirth movement known as the New Conquistadors. The Conquistadors model themselves after 20th century political armies such as Benito Mussolini’s Italian BlackShirts, Adolf Hitler’s brownshirts or Franco’s Fallange. They have also been likened to 20th century biker gangs. Their aim is to found a new Spanish Empire in North America, with its capital in California.

An - hell is charged with the murder of an undercover police woman, who was, allegedly, one of the Green Girlies on loan to the F.B.I.. Evidence at trial showed that she had posed as a Nun, a member of the Jane Fonda order of nuns, and infiltrated the New Conquistadors.

The prosecution charged that the Conquistadors had discovered her role as an undercover agent. In a rage, An - hell, who was fast falling in love with her, impaled her with his dueling saber. The defense claimed that the woman had attacked him with a sword, and that he was merely defending himself. The prosecution countered that this was unbelievable, since the New Caudillo is famous as a Swordsman. He has killed twelve men in televised Death Duels in Latin America, so it is unlikely that an experienced police officer would willingly risk a duel with him.

During the trial, many of An - hell’s strange beliefs came to light. For instance, he believes that he is the re-incarnation of the 20th Century Spanish Superspy, An - hell DeValero.”

The screen now showed an old black and white photo of a tall lean man in a black German S.S. uniform. He, too, wore a wide - brimmed hat and he, too, had a handlebar mustache. His jacket was casually draped over his shoulder, like a bullfighter’s cape. The face was different, but the blazing black eyes looked very much the same.

“ The prosecution argued that you can tell a lot about a man from his heroes. An - hell DeValero was obviously one of An - hell De Vladd’s heroes, and so, the details of DeValera’s life are relevant in assessing his present day admirer.

Research in the archives of the 20th century reveal that DeValera was a romantic figure in Spain, first rising to fame as a bullfighter. In his early career, he was known as “ Our Gypsy of Madrid ”. He had originally come from California, of Spanish stock, and had returned to Spain to find his roots there. When he was injured and had to retire from the bull ring, wealthy sports affectionados funded his education. He became a journalist and a Science Fiction Writer.

De Valera traveled throughout Europe. He came to believe that an Aryan Messiah would emerge to lead a new master race to rule the world. He became involved with the secret occult inner circle of the German Order of the S.S.. He joined the German intelligence service, the Abwehr, and returned to Spain as a German agent.

In 1940, DeValera was attached to the Spanish embassy in London, where he ran a network of saboteurs. He recruited a rag tag army of outcasts: Welsh Nationalists, I.R.A. gunsels, Scotch bootleggers...Discovered, he fled back to Spain.

In Spain, he was involved with a plot to get the deposed King of England to defect. When that fell through, he started working for Japan. He went to America, and set up a vast Hispanic spy network across The U.S.A.. Eventually, he was forced to flee to Argentina, where he helped one of his agents take over. He was Juan Peron's original control. After the end of World War II, DeValera helped to form the Fourth Reich that was later to take over the U.S. Republican party."

The screen switched to film of the current political figure addressing a crowd.

" This is what the New Caudillo claims he was, a thousand years ago. It clearly shows what he wants to become in our modern world !

The jury is expected to render its verdict today. Their verdict will go a long way in determining how far the New Caudillo will get with his plans. He has outlined those plans in his best-selling book, 'My Quest'."

Just then, their subterranean bus came to a halt in a large underground square. Above, a giant dome shed pale, bluish light on the whole area. Ahead of them, there was an underground park with bubbling fountains and an artificial stream. Beyond that, the great courthouse stood, an impressive white building cut into shape by sharp rectangular slabs of black and grey stone. It was a firm reminder that even if there were few demons of social injustice left, humanity can do quite a lot of evil on its own.

As they approached the Courthouse, their footsteps clicked on a pink cobblestone pathway that gave the whole area a slightly antique air. They entered through revolving doors and passed through a large foyer. On three of the sides were light gray walls literally lit up by luminous paintings, portraits of the heroes of the Green movement that had saved the world over the last 1000 years. At one side, there were glass walls that looked like smoke or fog. This was so outsiders could not see into the private area set aside for witnesses. The green girlies passed into this area as a group.

The Witness' lounge area was softly lit, with clean white walls and grass green carpeting. Old water - chesterfields (an evolutionary development of the waterbed) , lava lamps and easy chairs gave the place a homey look.

Several computers were available for the waiting witnesses to relax: a sort of electronic reading room where you could also play video games.

Sonya followed Opal to one of the terminals. They silently began to play a game they often played, a modern version of an ancient Chinese game involving green dragons and white tigers. A white tiger began to pursue a green dragon across the screen.

Opal snickered: "You know, sometimes I really get a kick out of those Ancient Herstory websites. Like, this site I found yesterday showed a typical twentieth century newspaper, The National Inquiry. It had an article about my namestone, the Opal. In old mythology, opals were believed to be unlucky unless you were October born.

The Russians were especially fearful of opals. They believed that the opal gave someone the power of the Evil Eye. Such a person could do wicked things, like turning your Vodka into

water.”

Even while trapped inside Sonya’s mind in the year 3033 CE, Paladin Lamb could not help but remember that the average North America teenager of the 20th Century was quite adept at turning vodka into water. Ah, heck, he’d done that trick himself a lot of times in his own adolescence. The article was illustrated by a sketch showing a mad Russian cringing before a pretty girl in a twirling black skirt and shiny black boots. She held out her hand before him, sticking her ring finger into his face. She wore a glowing ring with an opal on it. The caption said that Russians fear opals as much as vampires fear crosses.”

Suddenly, there came a loud mechanical groaning from the computer. The green dragon on the screen flashed and rolled over in apparent ecstasy.

“Gotcha again!” said Sonya.

Then their game was interrupted as the Prosecutor entered.

“Well, we’ll know soon enough, girlies.” He said, cheerfully. He was a big pear shaped man with freckles and curly red hair. His sideburns were tinged with just a bit of white. He had a pretty good hairdresser. The green girlies had checked him out - the hairdresser, that is. He also did wigs.

The prosecutor was wearing an almost worn out navy blue jacket with a red crest on the vest pocket. Over the course of the trial, the girlies had come to see this genial giant as their champion, a Knight in armour battling the dragon who worked for the defense. Too bad he didn’t have much of a lance.

“The other side sure played dirty.” said Opal.

The prosecutor smiled sadly. “He’s damn good at it, too. He used to be one of us, before he went over to the dark side. Now he’s got a secure government pension, he feels he can do anything. So he’s reverted to the dark ages, when they had something called an adversarial system.”

“A what?” said one of the Green Girlies.

“What’s an adversarial system?” asked another.

“The ancient legal system was a sort of trial by battle rather than a search for truth. Each side hired a champion to fight for it in court, just as people had hired Knights in armour to fight for them in the mediaeval trial by combat. Usually, the richest side could afford the best defenders. Eventually, they came be able to hire whole teams of defenders. Finally, after several such “dream teams” had stretched the fabric of justice beyond the breaking point, people had had enough of the adversarial system. They turned to the Franco - German continental system for an answer, and developed our modern way of law with the help of the German Green party and a commission of Islamic jurists. Islamic law was also a search for truth, or, at least, it was supposed to be one.”

““Playing the race card’ is not a search for truth!” said Opal.

“No, it’s not. In this case, the defence has gone back to the old ways that led to so much injustice in the before time. We suspect that someone is paying him privately. We will be investigating him after the trial.”

Opal was getting insistent. Her voice became somewhat shrill: “How does that help us now?”

A bell rang.

The prosecutor announced aloud, so all could hear, as if he were an ancient town crier: “Well, girls, court is opening up. Let’s go have a seat, Green Girlies. And keep our fingers

crossed.”

The Green Girlies formed a shrake again, and silently strolled into the courtroom, like a ghostly second jury gathering to sit in judgment on the first jury.

The Courtroom was well lit. It was set up as Clean Green Courtrooms had been set up from time immemorial. There were benches for the public, raised so they could get a better view. The bar and the bench were one and the same in this mode of operation. It was a sort of round table arrangement for the participants. The judge sat opposite the witness box, so he could look the witnesses in the eyes when they testified. After all, the eyes are supposed to be the mirrors of the soul. The judge and the parties sit at an even level. It is said that things are set up this way so as to remind the judges that they are still a part of the human race.

In the modern arrangement, the jury of twelve sat divided, with six jurors seated on each side of the judge. This arrangement had been developed so that they, too, could look into the eyes of each witness. In fact, before the evidence was called, they were told by the judge that they use this test of guilt. They should ask themselves if they could look the accused in the eyes and say: “I have no doubt that you are guilty. ”

Situated as they were, the jurors were commonly called the Wings of Justice.

Directly opposite the judge’s seat in the circle, the place was left empty, was a reminder that there was an unseen participant in the proceedings. At either side of that “void” sat the defense and the prosecution.

Behind the judge’s seat stood two flags, the Stars and Stripes, and the Green Flag of Mother Earth. Above the flags was the ancient symbol known as “Tai Chi”, symbolizing the opposite and complementary forces that make up the universe. In the circular design, two circular tadpoles, one evergreen green and the other China pale blue, danced around each other. These were identified with the universal forces: Yin and Yang. The supremacy of that sign showed that human justice should seek to harmonize with fundamental fairness. The Green Girlies fairly flooded the upper galleries. They saw the prosecutor take his seat, beside two green uniformed policemen who were assisting him.

The defense lawyer entered.

He was a little gray man with a thin face lined with age and thinning white hair. He was known to joke that “all those years working with criminals would turn anyone’s hair white.” As if to match his conservative character, he wore gray slacks and a gray sweater. People often joked that if the necktie had not been banned from all courtrooms 800 years before, he would have worn a suit and tie like they did in ancient times.

His client followed him into the Courtroom. An - hell de Vladd was a startling sight to see. He wore a black suit cut in a nineteenth century Spanish colonial style. He did wear a necktie, a black tie decorated with pink pigs. It was an anachronistic defiance of convention and the rule of law. Because he was the accused, he could get away with it. An - hell also wore a broad - brimmed Mexican hat, which he tipped sarcastically in the direction of the Green Girlies.

As he strode into the Courtroom, he was humming an ancient tune. Paladin Lamb immediately recognized it. It was the theme from the musical Man from La Mancha. Even in the year 3000 CE, the quest of Don Quixote de La Mancha still lived on: “ to dream the impossible dream, to reach the unreachable star”.

The judge entered last. He was a tall, portly bespectacled man with a bald head and a big nose. He wore a power navy blue turtleneck, a white necklace, and a white earring shaped like a crescent moon. He had a bright and shiny diamond set in his nose, as if to highlight it.

Sometimes men with big noses sought to emphasize that fact, hoping that women would draw certain conclusions from that feature.

Judges still had their vanity, despite the best efforts to cure them of it.

The presiding Judge sat down and said, informally: "Hi folks. Let's get the show on the road."

He reached forward and turned a tape machine on. He spoke again, loudly and officiously: "Criminal Court in and for the County of Los Angeles is now in session. Whatever you now say will be recorded. The date today is April 17, 3033 CE. "

Such introductory chores used to be done by Court Clerks, but the position of Court Clerk was abolished 700 years ago in one of the last cost cutting economy moves of the Republican Party. The Democrats discovered that they liked "No Frills Law", so they kept the streamlined system.

The Judge continued: "This is Judge Nicki Abraham presiding over the trial of An - hell de Vladimir Costello, also known as An - hell de Vladd. I have received notification that the jury has reached a verdict. I am directing the Court Constables to summon the jury."

They still needed Court Constables in the year 3033 CE, though there was also a move to abolish them and provide the judges with martial arts training instead.

The jury entered from a small green door to the side of the room. All of them were dark, Latino looking men with surly expressions on their faces. During the trial, several of them had been heard humming the theme from the Man from La Mancha as they walked into the Courtroom. The prosecutor had assured the Green Girlies that it must just be a co-incidence. Ancient music was enjoying a bit of a revival at the time. Otherwise, one might almost suspect that the defense had pulled a few strings to get that jury.

"Have you elected a foreman?" Asked the judge.

One of the men stood up and said, softly: "I am the foreman, senor."

"Have you reached a verdict?"

"We have."

"How do you find the defendant, guilty or not guilty?"

"We find the defendant not guilty."

An audible gasp went through the Courtroom. One of the Green Girlies shrieked: "No! No!" She was restrained by her friends, and fell sobbing into their arms.

"The defendant is discharged." said the judge. "Court is adjourned for the day."

The judge left the Courtroom quickly. Very quickly

An - hell stood and removed his hat. His head was balding, as many had guessed. He waved his hat at the green girlies with a flourish, and bowed like a performer at the end of a play. He smiled, and, smirking, sauntered out of the courtroom humming his old tune about dreaming the impossible dream.

Sonya spoke to Paladin in telepathic thought: "I remember the things we have just seen. After those events, we met in secret, the inner circle of the Pentagon. In solemn bitterness, we swore revenge. If An - hell could return to the evil ways of the past, so could we. We would go even further, back to the basic root of al justice: vendetta. The primordial primeval blood feud. And now, in the back time, I am hot on the man's trail. Soon, it will be me or him."

"Hey, I'm in this too." said Paladin Lamb his thoughts. "What is this, anyway? A flash forward, or a flash back?"

Suddenly, the world went black. Once again, they were hurtling down a long black tunnel

a wormhole in time, towards a distant light.

They woke up, once again in the earth side dimension in the separate bodies of the Lady Angel and the Cowboy.

Before them, on the television, the Perry Mason episode was coming to an end. Some time had passed while they were gone, but not much.

Sonya said: "We still don't fully understand flash forwards, even in my day."

The action continued on the black and white TV screen, and drew their attention momentarily.

Under cross examination, a witness for the prosecution confesses to the murder. Now the charges are dismissed with unanimous consent. The real murderer is taken into custody. Justice is done and is seen to be done.

The Lady Angel and the Cowboy stood beside one another. They just looked at each other and shrugged. Then they hugged each other.

Chapter Thirteen: “The Devil made me do it”

“Malcolm lives in the Sniper.”

This chilling sign was writ in charcoal on the side of a wet gray overpass ahead of them. Sonya was driving. She had the windshield wipers on full, and still the glass in front of them was full of tears. It was a typical summer thunder storm.

“Malcolm lives in the storm as well! He knew a lot of anger and injustice in these days. He was murdered before his time. In a later life, he would again become an even greater prophet. But enough of that for now.”

“Malcolm Who?” said Paladin Lamb.

“You don’t know your twentieth century history very well, lovie. And to think, it’s your century we’re bombing around in.”

“Early in my century.”

“Early in your century? It’s the 1960s, and we’re more than half way through the century. Malcolm X was a great leader of the Black Muslims, once known as DEE - TROIT RED! He was a criminal who became a crusader for God, the Man who converted Mohammed Ali to Islam! Or so the history books tell us, in our year

3033 CE. They say that Malcolm X was killed by his fellow Muslims. In the America of this era, conspiracies came in many colors.” She giggled. “But I’ll tell you, the conspiracy I’ve just unearthed is really wild, even for this Age of Conspiracies. It has to be the Mother of All Conspiracies.”

Smoothly, she wheeled around a corner, and continued to tell her story.

“I think the Black Baron trusts me now. He calls me his little mannequin. Funny how a little masochism can go a long way. Now he seems to think I’m his Mother Confessor. I don’t think they even had female priests back in this age. Oh, well, he treats me like one, anyway, kissing my ring and all. I was almost tempted to tell him to say a thousand Hail Marys for what he did to me the last time. But instead I’ll make him buy me dinner. There are some advantages to having a female confessor after all!

Well. Lovey, it seems that all these strange people around us are a part of a secret organization that seeks to Unite the Right. Their symbol is the Albino Alligator.”

“The what?” spluttered Paladin Lamb, still half asleep after his mid - morning nap. He had been dreaming about a former girlfriend who had lovingly nicknamed him

“Old Horizontal”, after some character in a television show about a pub or something. For just a moment, he thought that his dream sounded much better than this stuff about Alligators or whatever. He blurted out: “What’s this about crocodiles?”

“No wonder she called you ‘Old Horizontal’! Someday I’ll have to wash that brain of yours out with soap. Now PAY ATTENTION! Remember, I’m telepathic. They are called the Albino Alligator. They take their name from the giant white alligators that live in the sewers of New York City. This nasty race of ‘gators grew from pets that had been flushed down people’s toilets when they were no longer wanted as pets. The pigment of their skins changed because they never knew the sunlight. They became albinos, white alligators. Big and mean and silent, they would cruise the sewers of New York hiding just beneath the surface, hunting for prey, like so many insurance salesmen. There are a lot of salesmen in this Right wing group, so they took the name.”

Paladin yawned, and then gulped.

Sonya went on with her story: “In America these days, political parties need a symbol.

The Republicans have an elephant, because they all want to be big fat businessmen. The Democrats use a donkey. Maybe that's because Jesus rode on a donkey. Or maybe someone stayed too long at a party in Mexico and learned how to really screw someone. We'll never know."

"Judging by the Democrats of the twentieth century, it's probably the donkeys at Tiajuana that inspired them. It is said some of those Democrats would screw anything that moved."

"Well, anyway, our people want to be tough, so they chose the name Albino Alligator as a symbol for a United Right. White is good for the Ku Klux Klan, the Nazis, the Texas Oil billionaires, and even the White Russians. They also call themselves the white hand. That reflects their alliance with the old black hand, the mafia. Their organization spans the entire American establishment."

"Sounds incredible. How did you learn all this?"

"The Black Baron just loves to show off."

"He sounds like some of the bikers I used to work with," said Paladin

Lamb. "And you, Sonja, you sound as smooth as water."

"Thanks. I think. Well. Here we are."

She pulled into a parking lot beside a big building designed to look like the Roman Coliseum in miniature. A rough looking sign greeted them. "Gallento's gym" it said, in black on white. Beside it stood another sign, in white on black: "White Tiger Boxing Club". The signs celebrated the old boxing and the new. The club was named for "Two Ton Tony" Gallento, a white street fighter who once floored Joe Louis.

Paladin Lamb did know that part of history, and delighted in telling it to Sony. He went on to add: "After his retirement from the ring, he went on to gain even more fame for wrestling an octopus."

"What's unusual about that? Every high school girl who has ever dated the Football team has done that."

Their car doors slammed shut. Their footsteps clicked sharply as they walked across the parking lot, especially Sonya's high heels.

They passed the front entrance desk, waved on by a sleepy black man who knew them. "Shoeless Joe" had been a middleweight contender once. Now, he was just a punch drunk bum, sweeping floors and watching doors. He went back to reading his old Wrestling Magazine. It had a picture of burly "Bulldog" Brower on the cover, with his eyes bulging out of his head, looking as if he were a drunken monkey, or a conservative at a political Convention. For Paladin Lamb, it brought back memories of a misspent childhood in which he was a big time 'rasslin' fan. That had been before he, himself, became a martial artist. Well, everybody begins somewhere.

They made their way past squeaky Nautilus machines and thudding boxing bags, sweating bodies and dreaming minds, towards the dressing rooms in the back of the gym. Suddenly, they stopped at the sound of a shrill laugh. They poked their heads inside the massage room. They were shocked by the sight that greeted them.

Tanya the Terrible had a broad smirk on her face. Her flaming red hair leapt out from her pale blue businesswoman blouse. She stood with her black miniskirt hitched high above her hips, revealing her ample buttocks covered with ice blue panty hose. Her red boots shone as if they were wet. Lilly Limone, the arrogant one, the champion, the boss of the boss, was on her knees behind Tanya, passionately kissing her ass.

Tanya smiled at the Cowboy and winked, She said: "I'll be with you in a moment."

She stepped away from Lily and modestly let her miniskirt come down. Lilly nearly fell flat on her face because of the effort she had been putting into her kisses. She got back to her knees. Tanya leaned over and whispered something to her.

Lilly smiled blissfully, and assumed a lotus position. In the orange minidress that she was wearing above her sandaled feet, she looked like a parody of a Buddhist Nun.

Tanya stepped out of the small room and closed the door. She opened her eyes wide at the Cowboy, as if to ZAP him.

"The Great American Union Leader's dream! I got the boss to kiss my ass!"

She stopped her zap look, and smiled and winked at him. "Now to see if I can get you to get it up good. That might be a little harder." She shrugged. "But like the good professor says, anything is possible with hypnosis. Only believe."

"I thought you couldn't be hypnotized into doing something you wouldn't normally do." said the Cowboy, a bit uneasy. During the following conversation, Tanya spoke to him as if Sonya, who was standing right beside him, did not exist.

"If what the woman believes to be true was really true, she wouldn't mind doing it at all. You see, under hypnosis, she came to believe that I was the Devil himself, and a big strong hunk of a Devil at that. She was convinced that I was the Devil taking the form of a handsome young man. That gave the lady two reasons to be enthusiastic about kissing me."

"Zowie!" said the Cowboy. "She never used to be into witches and devils and stuff. What's come over her?"

"Age. You see, she's getting older now, and she's afraid that she's losing her looks. Like, Lilly still goes barefoot into the ring, because she thinks it makes her look sexy in a sort of submissive way. Her great rival Leapin' Lynda Liberty used to go barefoot, too, only she had an injury to her foot and now she has to wear boots into the ring. That's real galling for her, because she always prided herself on bein' the barefoot contessa, since her pappy said gals should be barefoot and pregnant. She used to say that 'one out of two aint bad. Now, she's 0 for two. Lilly gets to thinking about that, and it freaks her out. It just freaks her out. So now she's looking for the fountain of youth."

"She should try Tai Chi."

Sonya nudged him: "They don't have Tai Chi in this age in America."

Tanya ignored her: "I got Lilly drunk one night, and she told me all about it. She's afraid that one day, she'll have to wear boots like normal women."

"Can magik really help her?"

"Who knows. But if she believes that it can, that belief is a tool that I can use to control her. And control is everything. Imagine! This rich and powerful woman, the ladies wrestling champion, the power behind the promoter, and here she is, just going nuts kissing my ass. Oooo. I just love it. I feel just like a Tsarina! Like the Texas Oil barons say, ass kissing is the glue that holds the corporate world together. I just love to feel her moist lips pressing against my lovely glutes, and to feel her warm breath down

there...And to think, I'm making money on it, too. I'm videotaping it all on the side. I can sell the tapes to the kinky underground. There's lots of kinks around, you know. Making movies is a nice little sideline. You want to be in one with me? Just think how well Angelic sex would sell. Sex so good the audience shares the woman's orgasm."

“Tanya, you have got a one track mind.”

“Well, you gotta look at the profit in it. Not making a profit when you can is down right un-American.”

“What if Lilly finds out what you’ve been doing?”

“She’ll never see the tapes, because she won’t stoop to look at smut. She will never know. I’ll give her a post - hypnotic suggestion to forget, and it will wash her mind clean. She’ll know nothing, like a Pentecostal at a prayer meeting, or a drunk the morning after. She won’t remember anything, until the next time when I whisper to her the signal to go into a trance.”

“Signal?”

“Just a word whispered into her ear -if it’s the right word - will trigger the program. She’ll be right back in a trance. But until then, she’ll know nothing. She’d better. If she only knew what I was getting her to do, she’d freak. She’d just FREAK ! Then I’d have a real shootin’ match on my hands. We can’t have that now, can we?”

Tonight I want that Angelic sex you promised, or tomorrow, I’ll have the good professor hypnotize you.”

Chapter Fourteen: The Queen of Night

He followed the fiery redhead into the bedroom. Paladin Lamb, a C.S.I.S. agent so good that the CIA and the F.B.I once fought over his services, prided himself on being as strong and flexible as water. It is written that water is the lowest of all of nature's elements, yet it wears away the strongest rock. Now, it would fall to Paladin to prove the ancient sages right.

Paladin Lamb had completely taken over the Cowboy's body for this night. The Cowboy would not remember anything, for his "tapes" were not even running now. Our man from C.S.I.S. must concentrate on making love tonight, and let nothing else distract him. He had even got a special suite for them for the night, a luxury suite that traveling politicians used. No one who was not on the public trough could afford such digs under normal conditions. But this was to be a special occasion.

Tanya the Terrible turned and smiled at him with her red lips the bright color of arterial blood. Her violet eyes flashing at him like some other-worldly gems. A flaming redhead dressed in a black and purple satin gown, she was indeed a mountain with twin peaks. Like a weary mountain climber, his eyes surveyed those peaks. He licked his lips to moisten them.

It is written that sexual energy is the rocket fuel that can put one into the orbit of Cosmic Consciousness. In the next few hours, perhaps this bit of ancient Taoist theory would also be put to the test. Their bedroom would become a Spiritual Cape Canaveral.

Tanya's upper lip curled in a challenging sneer. She cocked her head back with the self-assurance that only a rich and beautiful woman can cultivate. It was as if she were a wild horse daring him to conquer her, to tame her, to ride her like a prize horse in the Rose Bowl parade.

She loosed her gown to reveal a pale green nightie, made of fine silk.

Paladin Lamb could not restrain his politically incorrect thinking. The soft curves of her body seemed to rise and fall like the mounds on his favorite golf course. Which golf club should he use? She looked like a number two wood would do nicely.

She was at least 40, but she begged to pass for 20 and came close.

The pink sheets on the gigantic bed were bathed in pale mauve light. Pale walls reflected back the light, just slightly muted. The decor was stark: an old green metal crucifix hung on the wall, that's all. Paladin Lamb had gone before and carefully prepared the scene. If this was to be a total experience, then everything should be just right, to create the atmosphere. The room was filled with electricity. In such a place, you could almost expect the Holy Grail to appear. What did that sacred vessel really signify, and was there really a sacred bloodline? Could the Holy Grail have been the cup of femininity? Between whose legs? What sort of orgasms did Mary Magdelaine have, anyway?

Her harsh voice broke his reverie: "Hey Cowboy, don't run away from me into that strange dream world of yours."

He strode across the room and hugged her warmly, at shoulder level. Then he slowly ran his hugging down her back until he was squeezing her nice firm glutes. He caught her blazing gaze and matched it. Softly, he said:

"We are indeed like Angels who can merge with God, however briefly, in the act of making love. "

"Oooo, I just love that love poetry of yours. I can feel electric sparks all over me, like fireflies on a hot summer night. Here, help me get my boots on."

She was never one to stand on ceremony. She liked to wear her boots while making love. She said her hero Mussolini did so. As she always put it, "I just love the smell of rubber boots on a hot summer day."

Tonight she wore her favorite knee high red rubber boots over bare feet, as she put it: "to better squiggle my toes in." He helped her on with them, and she pulled them up nice and snug. She reassured him: "It's O.K. These are plain Republican boots."

He sat beside her and she hugged him and kissed his earlobe. She spoke in a gravely whisper: "Come, like some thirsty and errant Knight Templar, and let loose the juices of Cornucopia. You see, I, too, can come up with poetry."

"Let your body be your poetry." said Paladin, caressing her curves. "No poet can match the golden rhythm of your glistening glutes."

"I'm glad that guys like good glutes, too." She giggled. "I do work hard in the gym to keep them looking nice, just so you will like them."

Paladin thought that maybe the horse-riding image wasn't too far from the truth.

He reached over and kissed her cheek. His hot breath caressed her ear like a south summer breeze in August.

Softly, he said:

"I CAN SEE BEHIND YOUR RACING MIND. Your body is the bedroom of the eternal. A bit of God lives deep inside you, and seeks that self-same spark in me. Let me come to you, like the golden sun that nightly gives the silver moon her bath of light. Join in a timeless drama. Across the millennia, the world looks on in wonder, to see the King of Day embrace the shimmering Queen of Night. The whole world truly shares her orgasms, in the ageless language of poetry."

She moaned as he caressed her.

"Please take your rubber boots off, just for tonight."

"Ohhh, all right. Just for tonight. Boy, you're old fashioned."

There was a method in his madness, as we are soon to see.

She held her foot up. He slowly rolled her rubber boot off...

CLUNK - THUNK !

The boot bounced right across the room.

"Ahhh, my foot can breath." She stretched her toes out into the air sensually.

"Is that the breath of life you spoke of in your poetry? Then take the other boot off, too. "

He did. It went CLUMP A THUNK, ACROSS THE ROOM.

And now, he knelt before her. Their eyes met once again. An invisible spark flew between them.

As the Taoist sages of ancient China had done so many centuries ago, Paladin Lamb now set about to use his knowledge of the secret arts of acupressure to get to her. He kissed the bubbling brook part of her foot, and caressed the secret love knot on her leg. An electric current flowed between them, as if his flickering tongue were the prong of a plug. His fingertips sparkled with electricity as he ran them slowly along her leg, like a musician strumming an invisible harp.

He laid her gently on her back on top of the bed. She felt warm and soft.

"Your body is the Temple of the Living God, and so is mine." He said.

Now his fingers took on a different form, as they crept slowly up her leg like the silk soft steps of a spider crawling along her skin.

"Let's flow together along the river of time, swept by whatever currents come along,

joyfully joining in the season's songs. Ah love, come for a moment out of time, and I'll be yours and you'll be mine, forever, in an instant, and forevermore."

He kissed her lips, long and slow, then spoke again:

"Now let the unseen snakes that sleep coiled up beneath our spines awake, and, glowing white, rise up within us. Let these hidden streams of Cosmic Energy come together, writhing, turning, twisting, mating in the Cosmic Dance of Life."

Then he was on top of her, and in her, like an incoming tide rising above the tidal plane. Their bodies were now bathed in their own light, a dark indigo, that seemed to glow all around them. They drifted now, in an indigo sea, a timeless indigo sea...out of touch with reality...Knowing nothing but each other. Was it mere moments, or eternity? Or did it even matter? Here, they drifted, outside the world of time, here, in blue reality, all was ETERNAL, coming to NOW!"

Both lovers breathed in unison, as if they were one body, like a mother and her unborn child.

He looked deeply into her sparkling violet eyes. He suddenly felt as if he could see deep, deep inside her mind. It looked like a great dark cave, filled with stalactites. Unexplored passages awaited, dangerous and exciting. He felt as if the adventure was just beginning.

He thought of the hallucinogen used by mediaeval witches. Tanya was so like that strange plant, the beautiful lady, belladonna.

Suddenly, there was a sharp sound. It startled him, and awoke them both from a light hypnotic trance.

Then they returned to the secret universe of their love.

The noise came once again.

"What was that?" He asked. "It sounded like someone at the door."

She sighed, annoyance creeping into her voice. "You go check it out, honey. I'm still on cloud nine. Whewww!"

As he slowly got up, he looked back at her. She seemed to be glowing as she lay back with her eyes closed. She seemed to wear a smile like Michael Angelo's great self portrait, the Mona Lisa. He hated to leave that room, it was just dancing with good vibrations.

He went across the living room and opened the door to their suite. He opened it to find Professor Paul Pringle, looking a bit disheveled in a red silk dressing gown..

The good Professor said, with a nasal slur:

"Did I come at a bad time?"

The smell of strong ale now filled the room. It seemed as if the good Professor had had a bit too much to drink.

"Can I borrow some beer from you, kind sir? It seems I've just run out."

"Hey, honey..." came the voice from the bedroom. "What is it?"

"It's just Professor Paul. He's run out of booze again!"

She screamed, then added: "Oooo! I could just kill him!"

"Uh, perhaps another day?" The Professor smiled and bowed slightly, as he slowly backed away from the door, closing it behind him as he did so.

"That's broken the spell now." He thought. "I was almost becoming bewitched. Bewitched. Now there's a TV series for you! Just think, if I was Elizabeth Montgomery, I could just twitch my nose and turn Professor Paul into a pumpkin. But would he even notice the difference? If I was Elizabeth Montgomery, would I have been in bed with Tanya the Terrible in the first place? Now there's an interesting thought to ponder."

Suddenly, Paladin came to an uneasy, queasy realization:

“Holy catsup! I’m startin’ to think like Cowboy Bob! Maybe this is one of the side effects of Time Travel. You become acclimatized. Then in this strange psychic possession that arises, the possessor can become the possessed. The Cowboy’s mind is sleeping now, I’ve blacked him out. So these thoughts are coming from my mind now. Being in this body is affecting my mind. I’m becoming just like Cowboy Bob!”

“Ho-ney!” She was standing, naked, by the bedroom door.

“I’m hungry.” He answered. “Want a snack?”

“Oooo! You muscle head! “She said. She sounded like she meant it, too.

He walked out to the kitchen and opened the fridge. He barely noticed that he was also naked. The cold piece of Pizza that he had was good, so he had one more to keep it company in his stomach.

He slapped his stomach. Yes, there was a little flab, but he had not gone to pieces like his friend the Zebra Kid. Like Tanya always said, you’re doing O.K. as long as you’ve got someone else to look down on.

“Ho - neeee .”

He turned around and saw Tanya standing in the doorway to the kitchen, wearing her purple dressing gown. Her face wore a lopsided sarcastic grin.

“Well,” said Paladin, resuming the Cowboy Bob persona: “One of yer rich friends once said that all working men thing about is food and sex, and I’ve just had sex. I’m just a working man, so what do you expect. Boy, you sure look so formal in that dressing gown...have some Pizza.”

Her voice came, ultra - sweet: “I was hoping for a rematch. Wasn’t that supposed to be two out of three falls?”

“The spell’s been broken and the contact lost.” He said. “To get that magical effect, we must connect in more than one dimension.”

“WHO - AH THERE, COWBOY! COME AGAIN!”

“ We will. When the time is right, and the stars are bright and the moon hangs full in the sky. We have to align ourselves with the stars and the meridians of the earth, so that we flow with the laws of synchronicity. An angel taught me that.”

“God, Cowboy! You sound just like a rocket scientist, and I know you ain’t that. What sort of garbage have you been reading, anyway? Have you been sneaking a peek at that New York times, again? Or have you got into Looney Leduc’s outa space pills again? They say that stuff will burn the brains right out of you, and you don’t have too much brains to loose!” He gave her his best “hurt puppy” look and she seemed to ease up on him a bit.

“Oh, honey...” she said: “A man don’t need brains when he’s got a good woman. All you need is muscles and meat. And you got lots of both.

If we stick together, with your looks and my brains, you could even be President of these United states someday. After all, everybody loves a Cowboy wearing a white hat!”

With that, she yawned and got herself a piece of cold Pizza.

Chapter Fifteen: “Authentic American”

Even fantasy figures like professional wrestlers have such mundane things as paydays, just as surely as they have headaches and hangovers. This day, they were lounging around a place known as Coney’s Bar and Grill, waiting for Leo and the dough. They occupied several different tables.

It was about time for them to get paid, too, since the next wrestling card was scheduled for that very night. Still, they were used to it. Leo was always slow to pay, but he did pay. You just had to get used to his habit of not paying you until he had his own money in from the last performance, and sometimes that took awhile. Then he had to pay for publicity for the current show and the rent for the arena, or whatever arrangements he had. He also had to pay his friends in the mob, or so some said. They had to get their piece of the action. It was the American way. It would be un-American if the mob didn't get their cut. Leo never actually admitted that it was mob money that was behind him, but he did admit to having "silent partners".

In the corner of the barroom, the Professor was having an early shot or two to "take the edge off". He said it was to calm his nerves, but he really needed it to make sure he didn't get the shakes. Silently, he prayed that no one would notice how bad he was at times. He still managed to make all his matches. He knew some other wrestling stars who hadn't done so. They slipped down to smaller promotions, then, sometimes, they just disappeared.

Nick Knuckle and Lieutenant Landmine joined him. He could always console himself that they drank a lot, too. Then the Cowboy joined them. He didn't drink at all. The Professor suspected that the Cowboy must be an alcoholic, since he didn't drink. Only alcoholics don't drink when all their friends do. He'd read about Alcoholics in College, and had come up with all sorts of arguments as to why he wasn't one himself. He was just stressed out doing his sexually provocative act, that's all. It's very stressful being a Gorgeous George type.

Landmine was warming up to one of his favorite subjects, the Kennedy clan, and the mob. Alcohol had loosened his tongue just as he had loosened the top button of his shirt. His face was flushed bright red.

"Hell, the mob won that election for Kennedy because his dad and Mooney from Chicago had a deal. So the mob delivered Illinois to the Democrats in the election, just like an extra large Pizza with all the trimmings. Only the young Kennedy boys, they had other ideas. So they double crossed the mob. That's why Mooney had Jack shot. It was a hit. The biggest hit in history. They killed the president of the United States. But now, here comes brother Bobby. Itching for revenge. But the wise guys'll never let it happen. They'll stop that punk, just wait and see."

"Cool it, friend," said the good Professor. "If anything does happen to him, people will think you know something."

"Hell, I'm just a teamster. Every one says we're all know nothings."

The Professor laughed : " On the contrary, everyone knows that Teamsters know it all. You just have to ask one of them. "

"**DO** you know something?" asked Cowboy Bob.

"Who do you think you are, J. Edgar Hoover?" asked the Looey.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about Hoover." said the Professor, smiling. "Even if he found out something, he wouldn't lift a finger to help Bobby Boy. After all, Bobby is the heir to Martin Luther King's dreams, and Hoover is a good ole boy from the south. King just freaked Hoover out, it's like he thought the black guy would rape him or something. Or maybe he hoped he would. Hoover is a strange bird."

"Maybe he's really another Gorgeous George type, haha..." said the Looey.

Just then, Starway Moon turned up the television and they heard Joan Baez singing the anthem of the day, "Blowin' in the Wind." The room grew silent for a moment, as they watched the news documentary that was coming on the T.V.

The Screen showed Bobby Kennedy visiting the poor blacks in Mississippi as a voice

said:

“His brother’s death has left him a haunted man. The pain of the loss has opened his heart to other things. He has begun to see with new eyes. It is as if his brother Jack has come back to do a better job this time, inside Bobby. Together, they would try to live up to the dream. The change in Bobby really began on a trip to the deep south. The rich boy from Harvard saw bitter poverty for the first time, close up.”

The camera panned over the run down shacks of a slum as Bobby’s Boston accent came over the air: “It is a crime for people to live in this rich nation and receive subsistence wages.”

Next, the camera showed the face of Martin Luther King junior. His voice rang out: “When people are pined in darkness, crime will happen.”

The film now showed buildings burning in a race riot.

The deep and powerful voice of Dr. King went on, like the wrath of God:

“The guilty are not only those who commit the crimes, but also those who create the darkness.”

The voice over spoke again: “ Senator Kennedy now carries on the dream of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, leading America on towards the promised land. ”

“Aw, Hooey!” bellowed the Looey.

“Shhh. I want to hear this.” said Starway Moon.

Starway was seated at a table with several of the lady wrestlers, including Looney Leduc and the Lady Angel.

The Looey growled: “Yer just for him because yer Catholic.”

Starway stood and glared at him, but they did settle down after a moment of tense silence.

The television screen showed Martin Luther King marching with others. An anonymous voice said: “Dr. King’s movement united all poor people, Hispanics, blacks, whites from Appalachia – all those who have been left out of the American dream.”

The camera then showed Robert Kennedy being mobbed by eager crowds of screaming young women.

The Professor said, in a soft and sinister way: “I hear those crowds even grab the cuff links off his shirt. He’s just like a rock star.”

“Har. Har.” bellowed Nick Knuckle. “Tha’s just like them little gold slippers of yours Starway Moon.”

“Hey Starway...” yelled the Looey. “When are you gonna run for office?”

Nick growled: “No ‘rassler’s ever gonna make it in politics. Rasslin’ is too honest for them political bums.”

They fell silent for a moment as the announcer concluded: “That which comes from the heart really reaches the heart. Senator Kennedy’s campaign is an authentic American experience.”

The program ended with an American flag flapping briskly in a strong blow, standing out dramatically from a clear blue sky. Again, there came the words to “Blowin’ in the Wind.”: “the answer my friend, is blowin’ in the wind, the answer is blowin’ in the wind.”

Just then, as if on cue, Leo the Promoter came in puffing a cigar. He carried several pay envelopes. On his face, he wore a deep scowl that told the world that something was very wrong.

He stood in the middle of the room, to make an announcement:

“I ain’t much good at this sort of thing. But maybe the best way is just to get on with it. One of our little wrestling family has just been killed in an automobile accident. Killer Karl Kool is no longer with us.”

“What?” said Looney Leduc as she staggered to her ever booted feet in shock. “What happened?”

“He drove a rented car right into the wall of a Roman Catholic Church.”

“A Church wall! Jesus! He really did kill himself ! ” Looney’s face was filled with sadness. “He said he might do that.”

“He talked about suicide?” asked Starway Moon, also very disturbed. “Why didn’t you tell us?”

“What could you do, anyway?” She replied. “What could any of us do? Besides, he swore me to secrecy. He said he might have to kill himself if he couldn’t control it any longer. He felt like there was something inside him, some force, like another person, trying to control him, trying to take him over. Like a devil. He felt like it was some sort of demonic possession. He tried to fight it, but he didn’t know how. He turned to me for help, because I’m supposed to know all about the dark side. But that’s all show, I don’t know, not really. I mostly fake it. If I knew more, I might have been able to help him. Now he’s gone. He told me that if he did it, he’d drive right into a church, because the Church couldn’t help him either. They don’t know about evil. They turn their back on it, they shun it, but they don’t know it so they can’t help much in fighting it. Only someone who has known evil herself can really understand.”

Paladin Lamb’s spirit surfaced within the cowboy and he and Sonya Savage exchanged knowing glances across the room. They had both studied the darkside, in order to fight it. But it was too late now. They read each other’s racing thoughts.

The demon trying to possess Killer Kool may have been none other than the Time Traveler Jo Ho!

What would happen to Jo Ho’s time traveling spirit once the host body has died? Maybe psychic time travel is not as harmless to the host body as is generally thought.

Leo the promoter tried to stay with the tough guy act. He took a big puff on his cigar and breathed out, enveloping his face in a cloud of smoke.

His voice was hard: “Looney, he had your picture in his wallet. The police need someone to identify the body, and I’m just not up to it. I don’t do death very well. And I can’t reach my wife, or I’d send her.”

“I’ll go.” said Looney, sadly. “It will be my way of saying goodbye.”

“O.K.” said Leo, gruffly recovering. “Now. Everybody, if it ain’t out of keeping with the occasion, it is still payday.”

Chapter Sixteen:

Every Match a Main Event

“Tanks fer da nose job!” growled Nick Knuckle.

“Anytime, chum.” said the Cowboy. “Think nothing of it.”

Nick brushed past the Cowboy, oozing hatred so much you could feel the cold vibrations of hell coming out of him. He went into one of the dressing rooms. The Cowboy looked back into the arena.

The poster outside had said: "Every match a main event!"

The big pink cardboard square carried facial photos of a smiling clean cut Cowboy Bob and a scowling unshaven Nick Knuckle under the banner

"PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING". Beneath that part of the poster announcing the real main event, between two wrestlers who really did hate each other, was the real come-on of the poster: a full body shot of Lilly Limone, the sex goddess of yesteryear. She was barefoot, flexing her hip, in a star studded purple bathing suit. The photo, fairly flattering at the time, was taken a few years ago, so she really did look terrific. Her jet black hair seemed to shine, and her dark eyes flashed with Latin passion.

"Yesirreee!" He thought. "The Main Event tonight is gonna be a lotta fun!"

This arena was conventional, with no special props like swimming pools to play around with. The ring was erected in the middle of what was ordinarily a baseball diamond. You could see cigarette smoke in the ring lights and feel a circus atmosphere among a largely rural crowd. The smell of stale tobacco was everywhere.

"I sure wish every 'rasslin' arena had a swimming pool!" He thought. "A pool makes everything a whole lot nicer. Sparkling water, like unheard music, causing dancing lights all around. Sort of like quiet strobe lights.

"Maybe someday they'll let me 'rassle a Octopus, like Two Ton Tony Gallento once did. I hear Octopusies are big in Detroit, so maybe when we pass through there. There's a fun type of 'rasslin' called a Texas Death Match. Why not a Detroit Octopus match? It could become a whole new style of 'rasslin'."

Speaking of heavy heavyweights, the next match was introduced in the ring. It would be more important than the main event, because it would help to settle one of the great issues of the day. Is the Vietnam Vet a Good guy, or a bad guy? This night, the Looney was to be a good guy. Professor Paul and his special second for the match, Looney Leduc, were already in the ring, working the crowd up, drawing heat. Boos went off like bombs as Looney, with her black hot pants and her ever present shiny black boots coming up over her knees, helped the good Professor wiggle out of a gigantic pink ladies' bathing suit. Underneath, he wore ring trunks that resembled pink panties.

"This guy don't see pink elephants, he becomes one!" thought Cowboy Bob.

Then, music came up over the P.A. system, loud, patriotic music, the Marine Hym. "From the Halls of Montezuma, to the shores of Tripoli..."

Lieutenant Landmine, dressed in battle fatigues and army boots, and wearing a green army helmet, strode into the ring carrying an American flag. "We will fight our country's battles, on air and land and sea!" The cheers exploded like an Atom bomb.

The Cowboy couldn't help but smile. With his jutting jaw and his menacing glare, Lieutenant Landmine looked as American as apple pie.

Just then, a kid saw the Cowboy watching the events going on in the ring, and pounced on him with an autograph album. The Cowboy smiled and obliged him. It is nice to have the fans like you. He found himself hoping that the Looney would become a face, a good guy.

The Cowboy stepped back from the arena and looked down the hallway that led to the dressing rooms. He saw Lilly Limone talking to her new protégé, the Catwoman. Catwoman was wearing a full length shiny black body suit and a matching black mask. She had white Go Go boots that looked like he'd seen then before. Somehow, she looked familiar. She carried a Kendo stick She was using it to do stretches, arching her back like a cat about to pounce. She really did look feline. Like people said of Batman's Catwoman: "MEEOWRRRR!" What a figure!

Lilly had come over to stand beside the cowboy. She quickly got his mind back on track,

by imitating Tanya's telltale voice: "You gonna watch this match too, huh, Cowboy?"

"Yep." He turned his attention back to the ring.

And in the ring, two giants squared off, the Khaki clad Vietnam Vet and the Professor in pink panties. It seemed to be symbolic of the Amerika of the day.

In no time at all, they had sprung into action, bouncing off the ring ropes for leverage and running criss-cross in the ring, then...Splat! They collided with a giant belly bump! Both fell down. The referee began to count as they staggered slowly to their feet.

Suddenly Looney Leduc and her eye catching thong were up on the ring apron. Her gorgeous glutes glistened in the ring lights.

"You are the belly of the great beast!" She yelled at the Looey. "You digest the souls of the damned!"

That seemed to get his attention, and he turned to look at her. The Professor floored him with a rabbit punch and then sat on him for the pin.

The crowd just exploded with BOOS! By now, they were well fueled by a little bit of their own Booze They filled the ring with garbage, even hitting the good guy with it by mistake. Good thing they weren't throwing handgrenades, or they might have succeeded in fragging the good Lieutenant after all.

Lieutenant Landmine was also furious. He stomped his feet and chased the Pink Professor and his lady Looney from the ring just in time to avoid setting off a full scale riot. All three rushed past the Cowboy to the safety of the dressing rooms.

Soon, the pollsters would tell them how it went. Then the decision would have to be made. Is the Vietnam Vet to be a "face" or a "heel"? A good guy, or a bad guy? That is the question. To be or not to be?

Lilly Limone said: "Looks like they just warmed the crowd up a bit." She winked at Cowboy Bob, and smiled. "I think you'll like this next match." With that, she left him to enter the ring with her new assistant.

The ladies' match was indeed a bit different. Tanya the Terrible entered the ring, all dressed in pale yellow ring robes and a bright yellow bathing suit, contrasting with her flaming red hair and her famous rust red boots. The crowd knew that she was the good girl, because she was wrestling a heel. The outfit gave them another cue. The crowd seemed to know what to expect. She waved to the crowd. They cheered.

Lilly Limone, dressed in her favorite star studded black bathing suit, strutted into the ring accompanied by a chorus of BOOS. Behind her was her second, the Catwoman, carrying her ever present Kendo stick. It looked as if Lilly was training a new tag team partner.

The match itself was full of the usual fireworks: flying drop kicks, flips and flops and cartwheels, quite a display of acrobatics. The ebb and flow came and went. At one point, Tanya wound up trapped in the corner on the bottom ropes while Lilly's famous bare feet gave her a facial. As the redhead got up from that, she did not look happy.

Well, she would have her secret revenge later, and the beauty of it all was that Lilly would never know. She'd be kissing the ass of one of her employees, and she would never know it! Well, turnabout is fair play, or so they say. And Tanya definitely did not like those feet in her face. That part of it was no act!

Inside the Cowboy, Paladin Lamb could not help but wonder...If the great Lilly Limone ever did find out what happened in those private hypnotic sessions, WOW ! Just imagine the look on her face! It would be priceless to see that !

He smiled as he thought of the obscene scene he had recently seen in which the wannabee witch was kissing the wicked witch where the sun don't shine .

Now the women took to running back and forth, bouncing off the ropes. Suddenly, the Catwoman struck out with her stick, tripping her. Tanya fell flat on her face. Lilly flipped her

over and flopped on her for the pin and the win.

After the match, the Catwoman went after Tanya with the Kendo stick. That proved to be a big mistake. She swatted Tanya's ample behind, with a SPLAT you could hear all over the arena.

Then the Catwoman stood back, laughing. She held the stick up, triumphantly, as the crowd Booed. Tanya took advantage of her opponent's momentary inattention and grabbed the stick from her.

A spear to the groin with the stick doubled the Catwoman over. Then the ravishing redhead swung and swatted the masked woman's soft behind. The sob was audible all over the arena.

The Catwoman and Lilly Limone fled the ring with Tanya in hot pursuit. As she rushed by the Cowboy, her face was a mask of fear, as if to say "Something is going terribly wrong, and I don't know what it is."

The two women made it to one of the dressing rooms. The dressing room doors slammed shut behind them.

Tanya swaggered along to her dressing room.

So now the P.A. blared: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the Main Event f the Evening..." The Cowboy heard his cue, and took his white hat into the ring.

Nick Knuckle followed him. The arena filled with BOOS and catcalls as he entered the ring. The fans hated to see themselves embodied in the actions of the redneck 'rassler, and they let him know it. The referee called them into the center of the ring and pretended to search them for weapons. "Easy guys." He said. "We don't need no riots here."

Everyone in the business knew about New York City. Nick Knuckle and his partner the Professor had touched off a riot that people still talked about. Many of the fans who went to see them secretly hoped that there would be another riot. As one of them once said: "If we all cut loose at once, THEY CAN'T CHARGE US ALL, CAN THEY?"

The RIOT in New York certainly helped to sell tickets EVERYWHERE ELSE.

The bell rang and the match began. These two men were not strangers, they had met in the ring many times before. Somehow the Cowboy always got the upper hand, probably because of good scriptwriting as much as anything else. Still, their grudge matches were famous, and always went over big.

The two men held out hands to test strength, and gripped each other's fingers. The Cowboy proved to be the stronger, and began to force Nick Knuckle to his knees. Then, with strength born of desperation, Nick Knuckle got back to his feet. Then he began to lose again. Suddenly, he kicked the Cowboy in the groin, "accidentally" making contact.

"Up to your old tricks again, eh Nick?" asked the Cowboy, under his breath.

The match continued. The Cowboy felt pain from the groin shot as he got Nick Knuckle in a headlock. He felt like death warmed over, so he thought of death. Suicide always leaves a gaping hole. He was still stunned by the death of Killer Kool.

The Cowboy was jarred back to reality as Nick Knuckle pulled his hair to get out of the headlock. The Cowboy slugged him, accidentally making contact. He muttered under his breath: "It's rude to interrupt a guy when he's daydreaming."

The Cowboy got Nick Knuckle in a standing wrist lock, then leapt up on him to turn it into a flying figure four arm lock, squeezing his victim's arm between his legs as he rolled the man about the ring. Eventually, they rolled out of the ring and the referee broke the hold.

Nick Knuckle hit on the break and floored the Cowboy, who came to just in time to see the giant redneck about to jump on him from the top rope in the corner. Quickly, Cowboy Bob rolled out of the way, and Nick Knuckle landed with a THUD and a cry of pain. He'd really been trying to land hard and hurt the Cowboy. Now we can't have that, can we

?

Cowboy Bob grabbed the injured leg.

“ No! No!” screamed Nick Knuckle, sounding so realistic.

Clean-cut Cowboy Bob Holiday smiled sweetly. He drew cheers as he twisted his opponent’s leg ‘round and ‘round in a spinning leg lock. He wanted to be sure to give those injured knee ligaments a nice little stretch, accidentally, of course.

“I give. I give.” you could hear Nick Knuckle yelling all over the arena. His cries really sounded convincing .

As the Cowboy stood aside and his arm was raised in victory, he thought:

“That oughta keep that redneck creep outa my hair for awhile. Now I can go back to my daydreams.”

Back in the dressing room, he heard the news. The pollsters had spoken.

Lieutenant Landmine, the American soldier, had done well as both a bad guy and a good guy. So he would be either one in turn, depending on what the market demanded.

With Nick Knuckle out of commission with an injured leg, the Looney would probably start out as a bad guy, replacing him.

Chapter Seventeen: Duel in the Darkness

“You really got it tonight!” said Paladin Lamb, leaning over to Sonya Savage. They were now alone in her hotel room. Tonight Sonya was specially appetizing in a black Betty Page wig, black minidress, silver pantyhose and white GoGo boots. She was starting to make that Betty Page look a specialty. She smiled at him and demurely sipped her Manhattan: Catwoman unmasked!

“I am just beginning to set up my revenge. You will soon see how a green girlie gets even! But I will have to move quickly. The California Primary is coming up fast. That night, our work will be done, one way or the other. So if I have any scores to settle, I had better do it fast.”

“The California Primary? Why is that important?”

“When Senator Kennedy was shot. On the Night of the California Primary. The New Gang of Four...or three, now, will have to strike before then to stop the assassination plot that is now in progress.”

“After that, I guess we’ll go back to our own times. We’ll never see each other again.”

“Yes, we will go back to our own times. That is as it should be, as it must be. We each have lives we were meant to live as a part of the scheme of things, each in our own time.”

“I will miss you, Sonya Savage.”

“And I will miss you, too, Paladin Lamb.”

“We still have a little time together. Let’s make the best of it.”

“Sound cool. But first I have a date with the Black Baron tonight. Some more unfinished business. Then we’ll have our time together.”

“Be careful.”

“Look. There’s the news coming on the TV again. And there’s Bobby Kennedy.”

The screen showed crowds of women yelling: “ BOBBY! BOBBY!
BOBBY!”

An announcer’s voice solemnly declared: “Recent polls show Senator Kennedy in the lead as the date of the California Democratic Primary draws near.”

The camera caught Kennedy’s face in a close - up as he smiled in a dazzle-dent toothpaste commercial sort of way.

Sonja sighed: “He is sexy. It’s just like Marilyn Monroe used to say, ‘Who needs all these old uglies in politics?’ There is a certain aura he exhudes. It even gets to me.”

Senator Kennedy’s nasal voice rang out from the television set, flowing with his almost lyrical Harvard accent: “We cannot just accept injustice. I want this country to stand for love, compassion and peace. I think we can turn this country around.”

Sonya sighed again: “He did have the right message, only at the wrong time. Why did it have to be the wrong time?”

Tears welled up in her eyes. Both knew that they would have to protect the plot to assassinate this visionary, and it sickened them. Sonya answered her own question:

“ Just like a low bottom drunk, Amerika will have to hit bottom in bitterness and blood before she will turn towards a real Spiritual solution. Only then will the seeds of Kennedy and King bear fruit.”

Again, Robert Kennedy’s voice came forth from the television set as he looked at flag draped coffins in an all too familiar setting: “Which of them might have taught a small child to read? Which of them might have found a cure for cancer? Which of them might have played in a World Series?”

Then Joan Baez, the legendary folk singer whose recorded voice did indeed last a thousand years, burst out in song: "Where have all the flowers gone? Long time ago..."

There came a knocking at the door. Sonja Savage took a bag from her suitcase and handed it to Paladin Lamb: "Quick. Get out of sight." She whispered. "Be waiting with these in the alley behind Coney's Bar and Grill in three hours. I will settle my accounts with him then, but first, I'll let him buy me dinner. It's a tradition us Green Girlies inherited from real women: before we off a man, we get him to buy dinner for us. It gives him a chance to do some good before we do him in. For now, hide in the closet."

He took her bag and hid in the closet. He did manage to peek out through the cracks and see her meet the Black Baron. He was dressed up in a suit made of black leather. He wore his black Elvis wig. They hugged each other and then the door closed behind them as they left for a night out on the town.

Paladin Lamb waited for a few moments to let them get clear, then left to kill a few hours.

He decided to go to a movie. He wandered along the street to a large theater building. Several features were playing at once, making it a sort of forerunner of the multiplex. He stopped to look over the posters.

"What movie shall I see?" he wondered, just as he had done when he was a kid. Many of the movies did bring back memories, for in this year of 1968, he was alive elsewhere, as a pubescent child, and was watching these same movies. "How odd, the quirks of fate." He thought. "I might even be watching the same movie twice, at the same time, once as a child and once as an adult."

"Barbarella!" said one poster. A large picture showed Jane Fonda in her prime, wearing a bathing suit and green boots. As the good professor would say, she did indeed look edible.

Ah, yes, he remembered that movie. There was Barbarella and the Black Queen and an Angel who flies off with both of them in the end. Sort of like Tanya and Sonya, with Paladin himself cast as the Angel. Maybe all three of them could share Angelic sex.

"Hmmm." He thought, "I'm looking for escapist stuff. That movie is just too realistic. But I'd sure like to try out the pleasure organ machine that blows Barbarella's mind."

"The Green Berets" proclaimed the next poster. John Wayne wore a uniform and pointed a gun at the passers by, as if to order them into the movie.

"That's probably the ancient forerunner of the Green Girlies. I'm getting sick about hearing about their exploits. I need some real escapism. Now, what's this?" He asked.

"The Saint Valentines Day Massacre." said the poster.

"How organized crime has grown since then, from killing other criminals to assassinating presidents."

He looked at the picture of Jason Robards, who played Al Capone, chomping on a big cigar.

"That guy could be president of the U.S. All he needs is a young female intern."

He remembered the movie, though. It was haunting, because you knew the ending from the outset. And you are reminded of it throughout the movie as the narrator repeatedly, and grimly, intones such things as: "At seven a.m. on the last day of his life, Joe Bloski was having coffee."

The events unfold like the beads in a Rosary. One can almost hear someone say: "Hail Mary, Mother of God. Pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death." Now the last

days of Senator Kennedy's life were ticking away in much the same way. That thought gave Paladin Lamb a cold shiver along the spine of his borrowed body. Maybe he had better pass on that movie.

"Now this looks interesting. 'The Wild Angels'!"

He'd seen that movie when he was a kid.

"Now that does look cool. Going on a run with a bunch of bikers. That would be a good break. Yeah!"

So Paladin Lamb made his choice and bought his ticket and went to the movie.

He bought a hot dog, a Coke and some buttered popcorn in the foyer. He glanced around at several posters advertising coming attractions. He passed through swing doors into the movie. He found an aisle seat half way down. There were several couples in the movie, and little clumps of youths, young wannabe biker gangs, here to learn how to do it, no doubt. Often, they formed junior biker gangs of their own.

Paladin Lamb remembered one that he had belonged to one such junior bike gang briefly when he was a child.. They called themselves the Skull Riders, and wore colors like the big bikers and they rode their bicycles around town. The Big Bikers all thought they looked "cute".

Even though there was no emergency, Paladin Lamb let his host continue to sleep. He did not want to be disturbed in his sentimental journey. He sat back to enjoy the movie.

The hot dog tasted of tin foil.

The film began with a little boy peddling wildly downhill on a tricycle being chased by his mother. He finally comes to a stop by a motorcycle. His mother catches him and hugs him and kisses him, then looks up at the rider. It is only then that we see the man on the motorcycle, a lean hard biker known as "Blues".

With a jolt, Paladin realized that he was not much older than that child when he first saw that movie. At that time he had pictured himself as being like "Blues". That seemed to be a cool thing to be.

Perhaps this was going to be more of a sentimental journey than he expected. Funny - he would later wind up as an undercover cop with a license to live a biker life - style. Was he re-enacting the role of "Blues" all those years?

Most bikers he knew had beer bellies. How come they drank lots of beer in the movie and nobody got fat except the mommas ?

As the movie rolled along, Paladin concluded that the best parts were scenes of the open road and sandy mountains standing out from the pale blue sky. He wished he was out there on a ride, hands to handlebars on a Harley.

As for the bikers in the movie, they were real dummies, just like the Gang that couldn't shoot straight, only they weren't funny. They go on a ride to a town called Mecca to retrieve a motorcycle that had been stolen from one of them. They find one of the parts from the hot bike in a Mexican chop shop and get into a fight with the Mexicans. There is no evidence of any skill in martial arts. The police come and they run away. They don't get the bike back. They don't even get even with the thieves. In leaving, they desert "the Loser", the aptly named gang member who'd had his bike stolen in the first place. He steals a police motorcycle and gets shot.

Come on, dummy, what else do you expect 'the man' to do? Of course they're gonna shoot you.

So, now the Loser lies in hospital, nearly dying. The gang "rescue" him. Without medical treatment, he does die.

Paladin Lamb felt a bit sick. He thought: "You mean, like, these are the guys I grew up admiring?"

The bikers he got paid to hang with as adults may have had beer bellies, but they also did have some brains.

The movie moves on to a dramatic conclusion. The Bikers meet in the Loser's hometown to bury him with style. His coffin is draped with a bright red Nazi flag,

complete with a white circle and swastika. Standing over the casket and looking like a Nazi party functionary, a local minister begins to speak. He talks of the tragedy of a young life lost, and says the Loser was one of God's children.

Blues stands up and challenges him: "Not God's children. Hell's Angels." Then he tells the group to party, and they do. In doing so, they trash the church. They also rape the Loser's widowed wife. Then they get the Loser out of his coffin and sit him down as if he were at the party. They put a cigarette in his mouth and talk to him as if he was still alive. Paladin Lamb, former undercover agent, found himself counting up the criminal charges that could be laid, and evaluating the probability of conviction.

Finally, the bikers put the Loser back in his coffin and set out in a procession to bury him. With really neat background music, the bikers move slowly through the town. The coffin and the pall bearers merge to resemble a single creature with many legs, almost like a centipede.

The climax comes as the bikers lower the coffin and stand around the open grave. Blues' girlfriend asks him if he should say something. He replies: "Nothin' to say."

Paladin smiled wryly and thought: "a lot of lives are like that." And secretly hoped that his wouldn't be.

All told, it was a disturbing movie, reminding him of the man he used to be.

As he got up to leave, he thought: "Well, there were lots of good looking women - and a neat scene where a girl wearing a bikini waved a red flag at a motorcycle during a biker party. The biker charged by her like a bull."

"Now there's an idea." thought Paladin Lamb. "Motorcycle bullfighting'. It's got a nice ring to it. Should be an Olympic sport. Beats the hell out of Ballroom Dancing."

As he strolled slowly from the movie theater, he had a brief flashback to a turning point in his own life.

It was sunset and he was on a ride, acting as the leader of the pack. He came over a hill, and saw another hill ahead. The road ahead was painted gold by the sun, and it seemed to rise to merge with the sky, as if he were riding, leading the bikers into the sky. For a moment, he felt immortal, as if he had passed through the portal of another universe. He was outside of time. Then the vision passed, and he was on a ride once more.

After that vision, he had spent years on his own pursuing that strange portal that he had passed through, ever so briefly. It was the beginning of his journey into the mystic aspect of martial arts.

At the appointed time, Paladin was waiting in the darkness of the alley. The Black Baron and his lady left the bar, walking slowly, arm in arm. He was singing the Horst Wessel anthem of the Nazis very loudly and off key. It was obvious that he had been drinking heavily.

Suddenly, Sonya stepped away from him and into the shadows of the alley. Paladin passed the bag to her. Silently, she drew two swords from it.

Suddenly, she stepped put from the shadows. She gave a loud KI - AAAA! and then

tossed one of the swords to the Baron, who caught it clumsily.

“Vot iss thiss?” He howled.

“You bragged about your swordsmanship - so lets have at it. Now show me your sword!”

“Vot? Gott in Himmell! I didn’t mean that kind of sword.”

“I think you’ll find that God has very little to do with things where you’re going! Even his dark angels leave that to their underlings.”

Her eyes flashed with righteous hatred.

“My dearest Baron.” she said, her voice filled with mockery. “You made me play your favorite game, ‘Arab Slave Girl.’ Well, I’ve got another game. It’s called ‘Make the Eunuch.’ I just know that you’ll enjoy it.” She began to walk towards him brandishing her own sword.

“Make the Eunuch?” His eyes opened wide. “That don’t sound like much fun.”

“Some of us girls would really rather play ‘eunuch maker’ than ‘slave girl’.”

Swiftly, she carved an ‘S’ on his stomach. Then, she playfully jabbed him in the groin with her blade.

“Oww!”

“I think you just got the point, senor.”

He rushed at her like an enraged bull. She parried his lunge, easily avoiding him. A dagger flashed in her other hand.

A cloud of confusion covered the Baron’s face. Then his eyes opened wide with fear. Just as fast, he regained his composure and advanced on her.

“So it iss a duel you vant, my little slave girl! Vell, I vill beat you and then clip you like a real Arab girl!”

“Like you did to that other girl after a swordfight? Like you did to the Green Girlie you killed on in the future?”

“How - how did you know?” His face went white and his mouth fell open. His eyes were wide with fear.

“WE know. That’s all you need to know. Now our revenge will follow you back through the centuries, ANGEL DE VLADD!”

“You know my name?”

“The green girlies know it all.”

“And they sent you back to get me?”

“Yes.”

“What about double jeopardy?”

“You went beyond the pale when your lawyer played the race card. The Early Anglo Saxons had a word for it. They called it outlawry. It is to bad Amerika lost that concept. It might have done wonders in controlling the mob.”

“So I am outlawed by the future am I? So, I will be king of the past. Liebchen, lets have at it, here, today. This is where our swords will sing! And the sword will be our judge.”

He took off his jacket and held it in his free hand. Then he advanced on her like the multi-lifetime expert swordsman that he was. He used his jacket as a duelists cape, a flowing fabric shield that he could swirl about.

She threw the dagger, but his jacket deflected it.

He quickly stepped on the dagger with a booted foot. She lunged and drove him back.

Then, with the speed of a mongoose, she retrieved her dagger as he flailed at her with his cloak. She used her sword to parry his quick lunge, and moved back warily.

She fainted with her dagger and then with her sword. In an underhand motion, she hurled the dagger at his eyes. As he ducked, she ran him through the solar plexus, striking deep.

His face went as white as the ghost he was soon to become. His eyes went dead. Then he fell like a stone, thudding to the ground.

“Ah, that was sweet!” said Sonya, as she stood back. Then she turned to Paladin and added: “I wish we could make love on his grave.”

“Let’s go back to your hotel room. It will be the next best thing.”

“Yes, good. Then his hovering soul can watch us know the pleasures he will never feel in death. He died a good death, drunk and lustful and in the heat of anger.”

“a good death?”

“...good for his damnation. Us green girlies take our revenge quite seriously.”

“Sonya, sometimes you scare me.”

She looked down at the fallen body, and spat.

In the distance, there was the sound of a siren.

“Sonya, uh, shouldn’t we be getting outa here? The police might have some questions.”

“Cool, baby. But don’t worry. In this era, the California police were covering up for dueling deaths all the time. In these years, there were many secret fraternities, really dueling societies, in California, dedicated to establishing the Fourth Reich right here in America. It seems that many ranking police officers had themselves been members of these German style dueling societies in their own youths. The police will just put it down to another dueling death. And they will cover it up, as usual.”

“Sonya, you were his judge and jury.”

“So were the Shaolin priests you so admire, Paladin Lamb. Do not forget your own history.”

“I guess we really are two of a kind.”

“Let’s go to my room and make one unearthly beast with two backs. Maybe we’ll become just like the angels while we’re doing it.”

“Cool.” said Paladin Lamb. “Real Cool.”

Chapter Eighteen: “Go to the Dream”

By the time they had got back to Sonya’s hotel room, it was quite late. Paladin Lamb was still in control of the Cowboy’s body. He turned the television set on. An old movie was playing, the classic, “Casablanca”. A black pianist was singing an old song. The words went something like: “A kiss is just a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh. The world will always welcome lovers, as time goes by.”

Sonya sat on the bed. Paladin sat down beside her. He spoke softly, sadly:

“It is so strange, Sonya. You and I will never meet in the flesh, yet we have become lovers.”

“We’re not unique, you know.”

“I thought we were terminally unique.”

“Far from it. Look, our spirits have met and mingled, albeit in bodies that are not our own. There are lovers who have not even shared that much.”

She kicked her off her Go Go boots, then crossed one leg over the other, and began to rub the bubbling brook spot on her right foot. She managed a lop - sided smile, and went on:

“For instance, a female historian in America had a passionate love affair with the British Admiral Lord Nelson, even though she lived 150 years later. Her collection of Nelson material became world famous, and their love affair was celebrated by poets who lived after her death. The human heart is timeless and can cross generations just as ships can cross the seas.”

“But we are here, even if it be in borrowed bodies. We can reach out, and even touch each other.” Paladin reached over and began to rub her bubbling brook. She wiggled her toes a bit.

“That does feel nice.” She purred.

He knelt before her, raised her leg, and kissed the bubbling brook part of her foot. He began to caress the fleshy trigger places higher on her leg. She loosened up, and let him do his thing for a moment. He looked up and their eyes met in mid air. Her eyes were lit up with a strange and holy fire, like two green candles burning in a church.

She slowly pulled her foot away and said: “Let’s play Tai Chi, the lovers’ way.”

He knew the way. She did as well. He ditched his cowboy boots and soon they stood, side by side, and foot by foot and arm in arm. Slowly, they rocked back and forth, rhythmically, as if trying to match the heartbeat of the cosmos.

Paladin Lamb whispered: “It is written that the one you love must become Divine. If you cannot see the face of God in your lover, where can you see it?”

“Shh.” She said. “Let us lose our thought in motion. Thinking only separates us. If we would become one, we must merge in our mutual motion.”

They rocked on, rhythmically, in a silence as great as a starlit night in midwinter is crisp. Their gentle movements ebbed and flowed, each listening to mystic music deep within them. Their two bodies became one harmony.

They both heard a voice. One could not tell if it was a male voice or a female one. It did not seem to matter.

The voice said: “Look at those flaming orange tulips in the painting on the wall. See how the flowers leap forth from their green stems like flames.”

The flowers became flames, and the painting issued crackling sounds, as if it had become a television set. The voice continued:

“As you lose yourselves in the center of those flames, you become open so the divine wind can blow through both of you. Two souls, caressed by but a single breeze. Two flames become a single fire, one light, one thought, one being. Becoming one, you two can pass through the portals of Angels. Lose yourselves together, and find eternity as one with us. It can happen anywhere. It can happen with anything. It can happen with just a kiss.”

Then there came a loud knocking at the door.

Suddenly, the magic current ceased flowing. It was as if the electric connection between the two wannabe lovers was broken, as if a plug had been pulled. The room felt cold and dark.

The knocking continued.

After a brief silence, Paladin sighed: “Well. Let’s go see who it is.”

They both walked over to the door, and Paladin opened it.

It was Professor Paul, looking a bit disheveled and wearing only a shiny purple dressing gown and red slippers.

“Urp. Uh, excuse me. Can I borrow some beer?”

“Borrow some beer?” Sonya screeched.

“He’s always doing that.” said Paladin Lamb, with a shrug.

“Uh, am I interrupting something?” said the good Professor, smiling sheepishly.

“Again.” said Paladin, amused.

“Again? Uh, yes. That other time, I remember now. Weren’t you with...oh oh. Uh, you see, I seem to have run out of beer and its four hours until the bars open again.”

“I don’t drink beer.” said Sonya. “It would ruin my nice thin figure.”

She wiggled a bit, showing off. Her black Betty Page wig fell off, and she angrily reached down and picked it up, putting it on screwy so that it lay on her skull lopsided, giving her a comical appearance. She continued, with mock sympathy:

“Oh you poor thing. I do have a wee shot of whiskey” She went over to a drawer and got out a 40 pounder. “Here, take this. It will help your liver.”

“Thanks, I think. That’s one I’ll owe you.”

He vanished down the hall as quickly as he had appeared, like a fat rat scurrying away with a piece of some dead body.

Paladin laughed. “help his liver?”

“After the way he interrupted us, I hope it helps his liver to kill him.”

“He’s broken the connection.”

“We were building a crystal palace, an interior castle of love. I was working on making a love chamber there for us to share. Now, it’s gone.”

“That point in time is gone. Will we ever find it again?”

“Not tonight.”

“Oh boy!” groaned Paladin Lamb. “I’m getting a helluva headache.”

Their attention wandered to the long neglected television set. The patrons of a night club in Casablanca were defying the Germans by singing the French National Anthem. The Marseillais is even more thrilling when you understand the French words:

“..each heart resolved...on victory or death ! ”

“Those must have been thrilling days back then resisting the Nazis.” said Paladin Lamb.

“Evil exists in every age. Don’t forget, we’ve got some Nazis of our own to worry about. Only the name is different. Now they call themselves the Albino Alligator.”

“What an image. It conjures up visions of knarled white monsters floating in the sewage. I sort of wish you hadn’t given him that whiskey. I could use a shot right now.”

“Well, if we’re not up to making love, lets get some work done while we have the privacy.” She sat on the top of the hotel room desk and crossed her legs in a way that somehow suggested simmering sexuality as she spoke. “It looks like it’s two down and two to go, and time is running out fast. Let’s go over what we know about our time terrorists.”

Paladin Lamb began to pace up and down, his hands clasped behind his back.

“We still can’t be sure of where the other two are hiding.” He said, looking thoughtful.

“Is Devi Llina lurking beneath the wildly painted face of Looney Leduc, or is she living inside Lilly Limone, playing politics. She was drawn to devilry, but which devil...or, rather which witch? Which witch is the witch? Or could she even switch witches on us?

And where has our she-male dancer gone? A thousand years in the future, she will walk on the wild side, wilder than wild. Is she buried deep within the bulk of Professor Paul, or dancing about in the slippered feet of Starway Moon? Or even better is she hiding in one of the women wrestlers?”

"I'm sure she'd rather be one of the girls. I know I would. I mean, I was a woman so, quite naturally, I thought of myself as a woman, and I became one when I traveled back in time, didn't I? What gender does Anastasia Fast become when she travels back in time? But then, if there were some sort of past incarnation link, s/he might not have had any choice in the matter."

"That does complicate things a bit. But maybe it also explains why the leading suspects as hosts to her are men. S/he may not have had any choice."

"Time is running out." Sonya wiggled her ankle seductively. "We have narrowed the search. Soon we will have to act, and we are still unsure. The Albino Alligator is plotting to kill Robert Kennedy, and two people in this wrestling troop are going to try to prevent that. They will have to act soon."

"So, my lady from the future, what do we do now? Surely, a thousand years from now, you must have come up with a few new tricks for cases such as this."

Sonya Savage stood, now, and she began to pace. Then he did, too. The two of them looked like some exotic waterfowl doing a mating dance as they discussed their case.

"We know so little," she said. "And yet we know so much...Let's see now. Maybe the answer lies in ancient history. There is an odd approach taken by the long lost Huron Confederacy.

The Huron Indians developed these techniques a thousand years before your time but they had been lost to the human race, until we found them once again. They were not known to you because your historical research lacked the capacity of time travel..."

"Time travel as a tool of historical research?" This sort of blew Paladin Lamb's mind.

"Sure. With the aid of time travel, we have studied all the ancient martial arts and mystic ways and even trod the paths of ancient China. Disguised as mystic dwarfs, we walked in the woodlands of prehistoric Canada, and knew the Huron people as our friends. WE learned the ways of the dream from them."

"The ways of the dream? This is getting really weird."

"You always said that you like to try new things. And you want to walk in the ways of the ancient Native North Americans, ways you feel have been lost. Well, here's your chance to walk along those pathways."

"I do want to know those ways. Lead on, my lady. Lead on."

"The Huron people turned to the dream for help in their despair. It was much like modern people turning to the Internet to reach out for kindred spirits. No one who did not know about the Internet would understand. In troubled times, they could draw upon the dream, reaching out for help into another dimension. So can we."

"Little good the dream did them. As I recall my history, the Iroquois wiped them out."

"That was only after the Jesuits and the ways of the New York traders had changed both the Huron and the Iroquois so that they no longer believed in the dream. It's when the Huron lost faith in the dream that they died."

"Have you used the dream before?"

"Yes, we have gone to the dream many times. The techniques of doing so are taught in our military schools, along with the woodland martial skills of the Iroquois, long thought to be lost and only retrieved by our time travelers, who posed as wood spirits watching them. You know, us Green Girlies from the future really are the stuff of legends." She giggled. "More than most realize, for we have gone back in time. We have drawn from the waters of the original sources of legend."

“Sounds just awesome, Sonya. Why didn’t we use this in the first place?”

“Even Green Girlies have rules they must obey. If we use such powers lightly, then our baser skills could atrophy. We wouldn’t want that, now would we?” She caught his eyes with a fierce gaze. “Come. Join me in a psychic dream.”

“So how do you induce a psychic dream?”

“I will show you how. Come, enter my dream and you will share it.”

She led him over to the bed. “Come, get undressed. Clothes do confine us so. In my day, there is a strange nursery riddle: ‘When Adam delved and Eve span, who then was the gentleman?’ What clothes did they wear in the garden of Eden?”

“You must live in interesting times. Do they still have suits and ties in the year 3000 CE?”

“Usually, it’s only as a figure of speech. In your times, one might say that something is as musky as the grave. Well, we speak of being as wormy as a necktie. It means much the same thing.”

She undressed him then and there and gave him a loose fitting white robe to wear. Then she stripped naked and donned a similar gown herself.

“Now our skin can breathe. We are much more fit to approach the angels. It is time for us to begin to induce a psychic dream.”

“So, Sonya, we’ve got into costume. Let’s get on with the play.”

“Now I lay me down to sleep - but first I ask a question. Without a question, there can be no answer. What we need to know is: ‘Where are the remaining members of the New Gang of Four?’ But we have to phrase the question the right way for our dream to answer it. Sort of like keying it into a computer the right way. By now, their energy must be keyed in to Robert F. Kennedy. So we must draw our symbol from him. We have to find the right icon to focus on...the right thing to key on in order to enter this program in the right way. You were alive back then, only much younger. What do you remember about the Bobby Kennedy assassination?”

“A train.” said Paladin Lamb. “All I remember is a train going across the country. And a song. The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” He sang, a bit off key: “Glory, glory Alleluia, glory, glory alleluia, as truth goes marching on.”

“Yes, yes.”

“I have seen him in the watch fires of a hundred neighboring camps. I see Union soldiers dressed in blue from America’s civil war.”

“From America’s first civil war? Oh, I forgot, in these days, there has been only one civil war in America.”

“I see their campfires as they sit around, ready to fight the forces of the Devil’s Confederacy. I feel a great evil, an evil that still lives today. I am afraid.”

“Do not be afraid. I have angels that I can call on and they will protect us.”

“Now I see a train.”

“There is a train in Bobby Kennedy’s future. And people by the wayside, waving ‘good-bye’ as he crosses the country for the last time. In the world we go to now, in the world of dreams, past, present and future, all are one. They merge in a way we cannot understand on this plane of existence.

Hold fast to that image as we go now into that gray world of dreams. Let’s lie down beside each other, There, that’s better. Oh, this firm mattress does feel good. Next, I place a small pillow beneath my neck as I lie down. Good, you’ve got one, too. Now breathe deeply. Feel the breath go down to your toes.

Let's hold hands. That's good. The same electric current flows between us and around.

As we enter a gentle sleep, breathe slowly, deeply. First the gut and then the chest and now fill up the rest. There's lungs up in your back, be sure to fill them, too.

Exhale, slowly, now. Now in silence, let's repeat the breath, and hold the image in our minds. We'll ride that train into our psychic dream."

Chapter 19: Dreamland

Marilyn Monroe was THE dream girl of the 1950s, the Kennedy brothers, and perhaps of the 20th century, and not just the foxie part of that century either. Who could be a better guide when entering the mystic land of dreams?

She appeared to our two “young ” dreamers in a misty swirl of smoke that smelled sort of like the stage she had so longed to live on during her lifetime.

She wore a red dress, studded with bluish diamonds. She also wore a stunning diamond necklace. Her legs were covered with pale blue silk, and silver high heel shoes shimmered on her feet. Still, her platinum hair managed to outshine her clothes and her jewelry, looking like an untouched field of snow in winter, sparkling in the radiant sun.

She looked like a moving movie poster from the past.

Her ruby red lips split with a pearly smile. She spoke with a whiskey hoarse whisper:

“Welcome to my new studio. It is really another universe, but to me it seems just like a new studio. Only in this world, there is no casting couch, only lights and cameras. And memories.

I have been dead for five years now. Time seems so flimsy, though. It’s like there is no such thing as time here, so I can never be late again! It all seems just like yesterday. But then, what meaning does time have for you? WE know all about you. In this dimension, we have been following you on our version of a closed circuit TV. Sometimes the images are a little blurred, but we can see most of what you do on earth.”

Paladin turned and saw Sonya Savage as he had come to know her, only instead of the usual Betty Page wig, she wore a Platinum blonde Marilyn Monroe wig and a dress that seemed to alternate between gray and blue. In their dream, she walked over and stood beside Marilyn Monroe, platinum blonde to platinum blonde. The scene just sizzled. Paladin Lamb hung back, in the shadows of the cavern they were in.

Sonya said: “I never thought of YOU as a guru.”

“But you always wanted to be me.” Marilyn paused, briefly. “So why not have me as your guru?”

Sonya blushed.

“Don’t be shy. Many people want to be me. Both men and women. Why there’s even a top cop in the FBI who dresses like me in secret. He has a blonde wig styled to look like me. He’s heard the tapes of what Bobby Kennedy did to me - and man! Does he ever hate Bobby!” She paused, and wrapped her arms around herself and cooed: “Maybe he’s jealous of me, making love with Bobby and all. But still, it’s so nice to have friends in high places!”

Sonya cooed right back: “I’ll bet you’ve been watching over Bobby Kennedy .”

“He gave me a dream and then shattered it.”

“So now you want to shatter his dreams?”

“No. I want to save his nobler vision in spite of my feelings about him. In a way, we are only as great as our dreams that live on after us, in other people. Maybe Bobby wasn’t altogether worthy, but his dream was good.

Remember, my former husband King Arthur and others of his round table were also prey for the Albino Alligator. So I’m not as new to the Liberal cause as many think, nor am I empty headed. I just pretended to be because men like that sort of thing.

Sonya looked her right in the eyes and cooed: “So - oo, who’s side are you on in all this?”

“I’m on the side of history happening as it should be. Bobby Kennedy must die. His

body must perish that his dream might live. I used to love that body, but now I see that the dream is more important.”

“You’ve been following us. Can you help us find the New Gang of Four?”

“That’s why I have come to you through the gray smoke of never never land.”

“Where are those evil spirits hiding?”

“The spirit known to you as Devi Llina now wears the starry tights of Lilly Limone, but you need not fear her. She’s so happy now she can cavort with demons that she has lost all interest in changing history. Two others, as you suspect, are now dead. But beware Professor Paul, for his is the worst spirit of them all.”

“What does he plan to do?”

“I cannot enter that dark mind from this direction, even in dreams. The sea of booze that he swims in during this lifetime prevents him from dreaming. It is as if he has managed to erect a force field around his mind. In this incarnation, he has gained great knowledge of the dark side of the Force. He reached out to see the future, and then Anastasia Fast walked across a bridge through time to reach a previous incarnation in that portly body. That’s how the others got here, too, along that self same bridge.

Sonya turned to Paladin Lamb and said:

“See? The dead in their various dimensions can only reach us in the silver gray mists of our dreams. If you cannot dream, it shuts them out.”

Marilyn Monroe smiled her best Dazzledent toothpaste smile and said to Sonya Savage: “Who is your friend who hides in shadows?”

“A ghost rider in my mind.”

“Is that the one called Paladin Lamb?”

“It is.”

“He’s a policeman of sorts, isn’t he? Just like my secret admirer in the platinum blonde wig. It is so - oo sweet, this legendary tough guy wanting to BE little old ME!” She hugged herself and wiggled and giggled: “When I was alive, I often didn’t want to be me. Isn’t that FUNNY?”

“What about our mission?” asked Sonya.

“I cannot read the mind of darkness, but I have been able to see that the Professor is in charge of a plot to create a zombie assassin by the use of hypnosis. He really is very good at it, the CIA use only the best. Now Anastasia Fast is in his body, trying to sabotage the project. Things are already set up so that they will run on course unless someone changes something. The killer is already programmed, like a time bomb ticking, waiting to go off. Professor Paul is just about the only one who can stop it.”

Paladin Lamb steeped forward, and said: “And if we stop him, Kennedy will die, and you will get revenge for being jilted? I hate to be the instrument of someone else’s vengeance.”

“I wasn’t just jilted. I was killed. And while I was still alive, the Kennedy’s treated me like a slab of meat. Now it is Bobby’s turn to become a slab of meat. Dead meat.

I’m not vindictive, it’s just that it will be better this way. If he lives, the scandal will come out and the dream will be destroyed. His enemies in the mob know all about me. They are about to use that knowledge. If Bobby dies, the dream may fade, but someday it will grow again. And he will live on as a legend. And so will I, as his secret consort. The story will be much more romantic with a tinge of mystery. We’ll live in the imagination of the future, like Antony and Cleopatra.

Bobby is a marked man. The black hand of the mob and the white hand of the CIA are

everywhere, even inside the Albino Alligator. Only Professor Paul can stop things now, and he's the one who designed the plan in the first place.

You might be able to enter his mind from your dimension. The best time is when he's just passing out drunk, in the seconds between wakefulness and sleep. It is when he is fading out that he is most open to you. That is the favorite route taken by demons who wish to possess people. I ought to know. In my drinking days, they did that to me all the time, the little devils."

The ghostly figure of the movie star stood still now, as if hearing something. Then her sad voice said:

"I can hear the angels speaking now. They tell me that Professor Paul is almost ready to pass out again. Go quickly in the secret ways you know, and enter his dark dreams."

The Marilyn figure stepped back a pace. She smiled and curtsied. Silver smoke began to rise around her as she spoke:

"I have played out my little scene within your dream. I now return to that gray world in which I dwell. I'll be waiting for my lover there, in limbo between heaven and hell."

She vanished into smoke and Sonya woke up. Then Paladin did as well.

Chapter 20 : “Dancing in the Darkness”

Sonya stood and looked sort of lost, as if her mind were light years away, a distance in time rather than space. For a few minutes, she stood stock still.

Then she thought aloud:

“ I get it now. I can see it now. If Bobby the dreamer, who can’t deliver the dream in this age, lives, if someone stops the assassination, the Kennedy campaign will be discredited by the sex scandal. That will cause his followers to lose faith. Even the youthful Petra Kelly will become disenchanted with the left. Instead of becoming a hero of human progress, she’ll become a middle class Republican housewife, working out to Jane Fonda Videos and forgetting the far braver Joan of Arc type images of Hanoi Jane. There will never be a play entitled the Green Goddess to inspire the New Age Prophet. AND THAT WILL change the course of world history. Without that play, the New Age Prophet would continue on the course of his wealthy life as a sort of stockbroker and die of a heart attack at the age of 56, leaving two children as juvenile delinquents and a greedy and disillusioned wife. We know that because he said so himself in his autobiography, which he actually wrote himself. Writing your own autobiography was unusual in the twentieth or twenty first century. So it all comes back to Petra Kelly and the fact that Bobby Kennedy inspired her. Without that, the New Age Revolution of the 21st Century would not occur, and the world would continue to live in darkness. AND NOW the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle all start to fit together.

But as for now. We’d better go and visit our platinum Professor Moriarty type. As Sherlock Holmes would say, “ the Game’s Afoot. ”

Paladin could not resist seeking to get some put in to all this: “I wonder what our illustrious forebear Sherlock Holmes would say about detectives using psychic dreams to do their work .”

“He might well approve. After all, his own creator, Arthur Cannon Doyle, was also a pioneer in the serious investigation of the paranormal. Many of his works of wonder on those subjects were almost lost. In his age, he could hardly dream of the way the use of such powers would become everyday events in the year 3000 CE. Only the Canadian psychiatric pioneer Dr. Bucke saw that coming, and his work was also largely forgotten until the COMING of the New Age Prophet. I wonder if even the wondrous Dr. Bucke could dream of the uses we would find for the newly evolving human powers, things like PSI warfare fought inside men’s minds. What would someday be everyday events were miracles to people in the past. Just like electricity. To the people of the past, even the electric light bulb would seem to be magic.”

“So how do we do the next bit, baby?”

“Well. To begin with, we lay off the pseudo - cool biker talk, it just doesn’t cut it with me. Paladin Lamb, you don’t even look like Sonny Barger! Yeah, I know all about him. He was a Canadian from Sarnia, Ontario and his parents were so turned off by him that they changed the family name. You came from Sarnia, too, and you grew up secretly idolizing him. All your adult life, you have secretly tried to live up to that tough guy image. But cut it out. I don’t have any patience for that sort of crap. We’ve got serious business to attend to, and there’s no time for macho psycho game playing .

“ So, lead on.”

“ Sit down beside me, here.”

They became two lotuses, holding hands, left to right and right to left. Thus, they set up a spiritual current flowing between their bodies. Then they began to breathe deeply. Inhaling and

exhaling, they joined as one and slowly merged with the stream of things. Their minds traveled to the place where sea and sky meet. There, together, they entered the portal of another universe.

Now, holding hands, they floated through dark waters lit by luminescent sea life, strange fishes that with eyes that shone like stars. They seemed to drift among strange constellations here in a new and ever changing cosmos.

Instinctively, they joined their thoughts together, and they thought of the Professor and his strange unearthly ways. Then, with the speed of thought, they traveled to him.

He was seated at a table, as naked as old Adam before he bit the apple. He was nodding, nearly out of it, like a Republican ward boss at 4 a.m. on Saturday morning, the perfect portrait of debauchery and decay. He looked truly bushed.

The time travelers, now holding hands like lovers strolling through a green park, floated over to him. With their free hands, each lover touched their fingers to his temple. Doing so, they set up a magic current. Then, they entered the dark caverns of his mind.

Caverns they were indeed, with bits of brain burned out by alcohol hanging down lying on the ground like fallen stalactites. Bright sparkling lights floated randomly about, flashes of past brilliance now long lost, disconnected from anything so they could no longer be of any use. The world is full of lost genius, of things that might have been. The Professor was certain that he, himself, was just such a lost genius. He was all too aware of all the things he might have done. Ah, but that lost genius could as easily have been a Hitler as an Einstein. So much for things that might have been!

Somehow, these strange and unseen guests found that they could move freely about this scene like the little tunnel rats that often ran through these caverns and only emerged during withdrawal periods. Just as the Professor had come to suspect, such rats were really there all the time. So it was easy for Paladin and Sonya to scoot all over the Professor's brain. They just took the form of small gray rats, and relied on the good professor to deny that they existed. They felt drawn towards a place, a deep dark dungeon like place, so dimly lit it could be the drunken mind of Edgar Allen Poe.

They came upon a strange little dance. A dark haired damsel - fly of a woman bowed before a strange altar. Her body shone in a black lady wrestler type bathing suit that was as speckled with stars as the Milky Way. She was barefoot. On the altar stood a bottle, filled with an amber fluid. Something shiny seemed to be moving in that bottle.

Sonya's thoughts seemed to whisper to Paladin: "There's a devil in that bottle."

Now, the star clad woman approached the strange altar. Her face was filled with joy as she reached for the bottle. Eagerly, she grasped it and removed the cork.

Steam rose from the neck of the bottle. She set the bottle down on the strange altar, and backed away a step or two, bowing as she did so. Within the steam, a figure began to take shape, the genie let loose from the bottle.

Soon, a seven foot tall giant, a big bald black man who could be in the N. B. A., stood starkly naked, smiling with lust at the girl. His shiny bronze skin was as bare as a classic statue. A stiff rod materialized in his right hand, a long black stick about an inch thick and six foot in length.

The giant spoke in a Jamaican accent: "Hahaha...I see you have come for your nightly beating. Hahaha, hahahaha!" His ivory teeth flashed like a white cap in a stormy sea.

The small woman curtsied to him, smiling a silly half - smile.

He raised the stick above him and began to swirl it above him, like the propeller blade of a helicopter.

“Please be gentle tonight.”

“I always am.” He laughed once again. “When I am done, I never hear you complain.”

She began to dance away from him. He swung at her and his stick snapped at her toes as she jumped about. Wild music, drums like a racing heart beat, now filled the room. Both of these strange figures burst into laughter as she jumped about dancing a little jig to avoid the stick.

Round and round the room he chased her, round and round. And still she danced away from him, ducking, dodging blows, laughing, teasing, taunting, flaunting her femininity.

Then, suddenly, the tide of battle turned as his blows began to land, and she began to sob.

“Cry baby!”

“Let me hit you with that stick and see how you like it .”

“That’s not the way the game is played.”

Then, as swift as any primeval tribesman he used his staff as a spear, and jabbed her in the groin. She bent over, split with pain. Her mouth gaped open, breathless. Then he whipped her across the buttocks, and she stood straight up, even onto tippy toes. Again, the spear thrust to her navel. And so she was jerked back and forth in a series of puppet - like convulsions.

She screamed: “You’re ruining my little dance!”

“Such anger, little girl.”

“That hurts, you know!”

Then she tried to grab the stick and he batted her on the nose. She held her nose and began to blubber like a baby. She staggered around as if lost in a fog, while he stood and watched her, laughing like a Neo - Conservative at a Food Bank that has just run out of food.

“You are not laughing now, my lady.” He said. He roared with laughter as she stood in shock, wide eyed with wonder.

“You’re laughing enough for both of us.” She whined. “Haven’t you done enough hurting?”

Again, he used his staff as a spear to her body. This time, she collapsed at his feet.

Triumphantly, he placed a foot on the back of her neck and ground her face into the floor. Then he nonchalantly picked her up like a sack of potatoes, and hoisted her over his shoulder. Her arms and legs hung loosely down around his torso. A black doorway now opened in the walls of the gray brain matter they were standing in, and the bronze giant carried his prize off into the darkness.

Sonya Savage and Paladin Lamb stared into the black doorway. All was silent, like the grave.

The dark woman, still wearing the Milky Way, seemed to appear from nowhere, looking quite annoyed. She was drenched in sweat. Tears still rolled down her cheeks. The room was as cold as a draught from hell. Her faint voice whistled like a Novemburial wind.

“I am Anastasia Fast and this is my inner sanctum. Who are you two uninvited guests come to my recurring dream dance?”

Sonya’s sweet voice was upbeat, like a telemarketing sales pitch .

“You might say that we are Angels, come to help you.”

“I might say that, but who are you, really?”

“Who do you want us to be? It’s your dream.”

“Angels? Hmmm...you two are not exactly a Ken and Barbie doll set. I suspect that maybe you are spies from the future. In my day, psyche spies are everywhere. How do I know you weren’t sent back in time by the Green Girlies, to take me back as a prisoner to my own times?”

“Do we look green to you?” asked Paladin, feigning ignorance. “I’m afraid we didn’t bring a flying saucer, either.”

Sonya Savage sneered, sarcastically: "Little green girls in flying saucers? Come on, this isn't television, it's your inner mind."

"Filled with demons, but at least they are my own demons."

"Do we look like demons?"

"I've seen some pretty cute demons."

"Like your giant we just saw?"

"He is the most beautiful of demons. In laughter, anger, or in tears, he brings me sweet oblivion."

Sonya's voice was filled with anger as she spoke: "He hurts you. We have just seen what he can do."

"He is my greatest comfort in this world. Everyone should have such a comforter. When he is done with me, the peace of darkness covers me like a warm blanket. Then I can forget the cold world outside. That is better help than I can find elsewhere."

"Have you looked?"

"Yes, through many lifetimes, I have looked for help. There is a curse upon me, and I have come back in time to cut it off at the root. You see, I am a womanly spirit forever doomed to be trapped in manly bodies, forever caught in the twilight between two genders, neither night nor day. In this perpetual borderland I must wander on, because of what I did in these times. Because I killed the dreams of Bobby Kennedy in this lifetime, my own dream of becoming a woman can never be fulfilled. That's all I want, simple pleasures you all take for granted, like painting my toenails."

She pointed to her bare feet. For the first time, they noticed that her toenails were blood red.

"Or wearing lipstick. You, my Lady Angel, can take all that for granted. I cannot. And it is all because, in the back times, I murdered dreams. So I've come back to my former incarnation to prevent that dark deed that has locked me into an eternity of dusk. Once I have changed the course of history again, undone the deeds I've done, I will at last pass over into night. Liberty! Fertility! Femininity!"

"How odd," said Sonya. "So many women want to escape all that."

"Then give them my male bodies, and I'll take over their sleek and subtle female forms!"

"I wish that I could do that." Sonya reached out and held woman's hand. "How are you going to set yourself free?"

"In these days, I was part of a plot to program a zombie assassin to kill Bobby Kennedy. I was Professor Paul Pringle, the CIA's top hypnotist. I was also one of the directors of the Albino Alligator, a sort of conservative think tank. It was my job to program a zombie assassin who could not be traced back to them. I had done similar work for the CIA and the Mafia before. These days, the two were working together all the time. It's just like mob boss Sam Giancana said, there was a lot of money to be made in the 'Nam. And I was helping to make it all possible. I used to joke that it was my patriotic duty. I never knew the terrible price that I would someday have to pay."

"What if you just do nothing?"

"Tanya takes over. She is a white Russian, and they are truly merciless. They even wrote the Protocols of Zion that Adolph Hitler used so effectively as propaganda. I chose well my top assistant well, too well. In this lifetime, I really was a genius. Even my flawless murder plots had back - up systems. So now I must outwit my former self. Even Sherlock Holmes never had to do

that.”

Sonya smiled sweetly, and said: “I can see that you have thought it all out.”

“Yes, I have. When the right time comes, I will make my move and stop the assassination cold. Bobby Kennedy will live on, and I will be spared the curse that has followed me through many lifetimes.”

Sonya took the woman’s other hand and stood before her, looking deep into her eyes: “Come what, come may, I’ll find a way to set you free. Trust me. You will see.”

With that, the two time traveling intruders thought themselves out of the Professor’s mad dream. Once again, the star clad woman was left alone in the dark caverns of her mind. She turned and went to see her giant genie who still awaited her in the blackness of the dark night of her soul.

Chapter 21: Journey into Darkness

As for Paladin and Sonya, they now drifted, hand in hand through the dimension between sleep and wakefulness, life and death. They were weightless, just like two scuba divers floating in neutral gravity, only they could communicate telepathically. Strange lights flashed around them, like the creatures of the purple - dark deep sea.

“You said you’d free her from the curse that’s on her. How the hell are you going to do that?” asked Paladin Lamb, as they floated through the luminescence of their alternative dimension. “If you help her to escape her curse, you’ll change the course of history. The Nightmarish dreams of the Neo-cons will rule the future. Think of a world where Greed is God and the weak are merely sources of spare body parts for the transplants of the rich. That’s the future they will give us. We came here to prevent that sort of future. One damned soul is a small price to pay for the future of the human race.”

“Have a little compassion, Paladin Lamb. Start acting more like a Shaolin priest and less like a biker. I’ll find a way to save her soul. I’ll ask my angels.”

“Your angels?” Paladin Lamb laughed silently. “This is getting curiouiser and curiouiser, stranger and stranger, and this adventure was mighty strange to start with.”

“Us Green Girlies have forces that we can draw upon that are way beyond even your advanced martial arts. All the skills of fabled Atlantis have been reborn among us. I will use those spiritual skills to free that star clad woman from the things now set in motion. If, as it turns out, she doesn’t take her part in all of this, then she will be spared from the curse. I’ll find a way. After all, I am a Green Girlie! We always get our way!”

“Our mission is just to stop the New Gang of Four.”

“And so we will. But how we stop them is up to us.”

“You’re acting like a do - gooder.”

“You have been hanging with those biker friends of yours for far too long. Even though you are as strong as water, don’t forget that water sometimes takes on the color of its surroundings. If we can, we want to neutralize our opponents in a NICE way. That is why they call our organization NICE in the first place.”

“Neutralize them, and make them happy, too. Like, WOW!” Paladin threw a couple of playful punches with his free hand. “BIFF! BAM! POW! That’s cool.”

“You’re catching on. In my day they always say that the best way to screw someone is to do it so they do not know you’re screwing them.”

“Are you sure that all the Republicans have died out by your days?”

“Well, the truth is that some of them have survived, in a human version of a Jurassic park. They feel superior because they’ve walled the rest of the world out from their little suburbs. They only see what they want to see on television, so it is easy to control what they see of the world outside their little enclaves. We feed them and clothe them, and watch them for our entertainment. They live out their little lives before our hidden cameras.

Unknown to them, the rest of us watch the edited versions of their lives on afternoon television. We call such programs ‘soups’. But - why do you ask? What is so important about a few Zoos full of Republicans in the third millennium?”

“Oh, I don’t know, LETS GET BACK TO OUR BORROWED BODIES. I need to feel some warm flesh, just to become re - oriented. I’m getting spaced out.”

“NOT YET! We have another call to make. One that I am sure you won’t mind.”

“Oh?”

“You have always been partial to redheads.”

“Oh, no! We’re not going back into Tanya’s terrible mind? We could get stuck there, and have to live our lives out as a White Russian.”

“Trust me, I won’t leave you in Tanya’s mind. It’s not your karma to live her life.”

“You know, exploring people’s dreams is not all it’s cracked up to be. Real life dreams are such dreary places. In the Professor’s brain, I expected from her...er...him...er...her...er...whatever...Anyway, in that brain at least, I expected a bit more color. Maybe a pink bathing suit, or at least a turquoise one with glittering gold stars, or something like that.”

“Color is not known at the lower levels of consciousness. That’s why most sleeping dreams are black and white. It is only in historic times that human beings could even perceive the color “blue”. As your scholarly Dr. Bucke wrote in 1900, the ancients do not speak of blue as a separate color. When Homer wrote about wine dark waters, he was indeed seeing them as black, just the way he saw the wine in his glass. Just as movies came first in black and white, so did human sight. Color Consciousness arose after that, and then came Cosmic Consciousness. That’s why they say that ‘Color Consciousness’ is next to ‘Cosmic Consciousness’.”

“Hey, ever think of becoming a college professor?”

“No.”

“Perhaps that’s just as well.”

“Well, you were complaining about the lack of color in the dreams we’re visiting, so I thought I’d explain.”

“Thanks.”

“The dark conspirators that lurk inside the belly of the Great Beast, of the Albino Alligator, have great and twisted mystic powers, but they are nowhere near to Cosmic Consciousness.”

“Cosmic Consciousness?”

“Trust me, lovey. It’s even better than Angelic sex.”

“All right, let’s go see Tanya the Terrible.”

The two of them then thought of her, and, thus, they traveled to her with the speed of thought itself. Paladin felt as much as thought: “This is a magical dimension after all!”

They floated towards a part of their strange and starry cosmos that was bathed in reddish light. It looked just like the red night sky glow that mediaeval man used to see as the blood of Christ flowing through the firmament. Suddenly, they perceived the source of it all. It was a small red night light glowing in the bedroom of Tanya the Terrible. The smell of incense filled the room. The sleeping form of Tanya lay on her back on her bed, looking at first like a virgin placed upon a strange exotic altar, readied for some strange sacrifice.

She wore a pale pink nightie that split in a revealing way at her heavily heaving cleavage. Her face was framed by her long red hair, that lay draped over a pale pastel yellow pillow.

The soft warm colors of her bedroom blended to create a startling effect. In the dim light, she appeared peaceful, like a sleeping angel. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

The astral travelers reached over, each touching one of the woman’s temples. With that, they were transported inside her brain.

The cold hard world of her sleeping mind contrasted sharply with the soft warm atmosphere of her earthly bedroom. Here, there were no soft and glowing colors, only cold stark blacks and grays. This was quite literally a nightmare world.

A woman with parchment pale skin was seated at the center of a grizzled group of men.

Both of her eyes were blackened, as was the tip of her nose. She wore only dark undies and dark boots. She had an old fashioned straight razor in her hand with which she slashed her right leg.

Her sad voice said: "Oh, the things I do to please the men I'm with."

The dreamer fled, taking her unseen astral visitors with her.

Suddenly, the dreamer was sitting in a barroom. There was a black and white horror show on T.V. , something about some Texans mutilating women. Disembodied arms and legs drifted by, as if coming from nowhere.

The dreamer complained, but the bar maid would not change the channel, because the other patrons wanted to watch "that classic snuff film."

Once again, the dreamer fled. She heard mocking laughter and a voice that said: "In death, we sometimes ride a train, a train traveling through a land of nightmares, rolling along like strange thunder."

Then came darkness, oblivion, utter, cold darkness. Then, swirling smoke rose from the ground, like mists in a bog at night. Overhead, a full moon shone silvery gray behind a thin veil of cloud.

Slowly, things began to clear. Tanya stood, with her torso in the white uniform of a Tsarist Admiral, at the command post of her mind. It resembled the bridge of a battleship. Two shadows lurked behind her, like half lost memories of the night before the morning after.

Paladin Lamb had never before dared to explore this portion of Tanya's mind, this strange inner sanctum sanctorum, or whatever.

The command post of her mind did not look anything like the luxurious palace one might expect to find with such a voluptuous wannabe nymphet. Tall, angular screens cut through vary high walls, all in pale shades of grey. Between the screens hung black crucifixes and tall lean icons of Father Grigory Rasputin, advisor to the Tsarina of all Russia, and revered ancestor of Tanya the Terrible. This was a neat, immaculate place, totally unlike the Professor's alcohol damaged brain. There were no stalactites hanging down anywhere, and everything was spit and polish clean.

Tanya wore an Admiral's cap, with the eagle of Tsarist Russia on the band, and she had a white jacket with some braid along the front. Below that, she was quite a contrast, for she wore black hot pants, and her ever present rust red boots, the only color in this dark grey dreamscape.

She seemed to sense another presence, for she asked: "Can you explain that crazy dream of mine?"

Sonya answered her, speaking in a genderless whisper: "It's death. The dream is one of death. When we die, we sometimes come together piece meal, different body parts reappearing at different times. Your dream was just like when a great battleship explodes, and men see disembodied arms and legs flying by them."

"A great Battleship is about to sink, and it will make up for what happened on the Potemkin."

"What happened there?"

"Treason, rebellion, the Russian Revolution all began there, twelve years before the rising of 1917. Soon, I will put an end to revolution, here, in America. The war in Viet Nam must go on. Compounded, the cost of the Viet Nam war and events that flow from it will destroy Communist Russia. So the treason on the Potemkin will be avenged at last. And who are you, Stranger? What voice now speaks in my mind?"

As she turned around, Sonya instantly dressed herself in the costume of thought and appeared in the black cowed form of a seven foot tall monk. Tanya opened her eyes wide:

“Father Grigory! It is you!”

The monk held out a hand with a ring on it, and Tanya bowed before the giant figure and devoutly kissed the ring.

“It is such an honor, Father Grigory. Oh, if you had only had the chance you would have been so much greater than any of today’s televangelists! In your day, you could even heal people without a television set for them to hold onto. What brings you into my dream?”

“I have come to warn you. Your friend the Portly Professor has turned against you. He will destroy your project if you do not eliminate him and take over.”

“Who could he sell us out to? The CIA and the FBI are all in with us, at least far enough so that they won’t interfere with us. There is no one left to betray us to.”

“I am not free to tell you more. But he who was your friend is now your enemy. Heed my warning before it is too late. Before the date set for your dark deeds, you must make sure he can no longer impede you. Heed my warning before it is too late. You still have the power, now seize the hour!”

With that, the figure thought itself out of her dream in a puff of smoke. Another shadowy form followed. Soon, Sonya and Paladin were together again, drifting through star filled dimension outside of the known world. Tanya lay behind them, fast asleep.

“This dream hopping is kind of fun.” thought Paladin Lamb. “We’ll have to do this more often.”

Chapter 22: “Friendly Fire”

The Astral Travelers returned to their own bodies and soon fell fast asleep. Even though their earthly bodies had never moved, it had been a very tiring night.

When he awoke, naked as he so often slept, Paladin Lamb, still moving the Cowboy’s body, felt sluggish and stiff. He seemed to be sliding through a silver fog. Slowly, the mist cleared from his eyes. As it did, he began to feel hungry.

He looked around. He was now alone in his hotel room, with only faint memories of the night before.

He walked over to the bathroom. As he got his shaving gear out from its tiny suitcase, he looked in the mirror. Somehow, his icy blue eyes had a sharp and cold look to them, like a stone killer. He had killed before, in the line of duty. He put that out of his mind. His blue jowls gave his lean looking face a haggard touch. Time to shave, to soften that image a bit.

He felt better as he lathered up, feeling the warm brush strokes and smelling the scented lather.

Soon, he had a face full of shaving cream. He laughed to think of how he could be Santa Clause...or even the Renaissance vision of an anthropomorphic God.

It would be fun to play God. Playfully, he stuck out the first finger on his right hand. Like the barrel of a gun? Naw. Like that famous painting, where God gives life to Adam. Wouldn’t it be fun someday, to create a new Adam and Eve and breathe life into them?

A voice inside of him said: “YOU ARE THE UNCREATED WORD OF GOD. IN LIVING YOUR LIVES, YOU FULFILL HIS CREATIVE WORK.”

Then he thought some crazy thoughts: “To heck with it! It’s so much easier just to blow people away. Child birth hurts, you know.”

Something else told him that Astral travel could play tricks on the mind if you are not careful.

The sharp blade on his razor felt good. Soon his face was as clean and smooth as a baby. It felt much better.

He felt hungry. What sort of God needs breakfast? Well, maybe he was only an apprentice God, after all.

He got dressed. First, his gray socks, and then his navy blue jockey underwear. Why was it that women, getting dressed, were so much more interesting? Oh, well...he pulled on his blue jeans, then his white T - shirt and his Jean jacket. He got his white cowboy boots. Damn. Some people should watch their dogs better. His boots were dirty. He thought that that was a helluva way to treat an apprentice god.

Still groggy, he staggered downstairs to the hotel restaurant to hunt up some breakfast.

The dining room was nearly empty. He picked up a menu and decided on pancakes and bacon. A little sugar shot from the golden syrup would give him a boost.

He picked up an abandoned morning newspaper from a nearby table.

The petite brunette waitress, looking kinda cute in her crisp black dress, came over to him. She smiled, in a shy way, and handed him a brown and cream colored menu that looked a little beat up.

“ Uh, yeah...pancakes and bacon with extra bacon. And syrup. Lotsa syrup.”

She turned, crisp and efficient as a good waitress should be, and walked away.

His eyes followed her slim young form, focusing on her flat black shoes and her real black hose.

The mind of Paladin Lamb wandered, as it was want to do at times. He thought of how the Scientists and Mathematicians had proven that the BEE could never fly. Only someone

forgot to tell the BEE. It had been just the same way with time travel, too.

Paladin Lamb began to read the morning papers. Most of the first page was taken up with news about the California Democratic Primary. This was voting day. Here. Now. Today. The final showdown.

Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy's children's crusade against the war in Viet Nam had toppled an Incumbent president. Now, he faced Robert F. Kennedy, the heir to the American dream, in California, the land of dreams. In a way, this was a joust of dreamers, an almost mythic combat, like a battle between two Knights in the mists of Avallion .

The only difference was that the swords were words, wielded electronically. Both camps were confident of victory. Soon, we'd know.

On the Republican side, California Governor Ronald Reagan led a slate of delegates as a Favorite Son candidate. He had no chance of winning. After all, who would ever vote for a right wing actor for president? His real purpose was to help stop Richard Nixon. Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York State carried the banners of

Liberal Republicanism, like a sort of later day Teddy Roosevelt, only without the toughness and the troops and San Juan Hill. But he had millions of dollars, so that didn't matter much.

As Paladin Lamb thought of it, all this seemed to be ancient history, or herstory, if you will. Still, it was happening here, today. It was in the now! Like, WOW!

The politicians had to share the front pages with another story. Artist Andy Warhol had been shot last night. In the newspaper photograph, haunting dark eyes stared out from his lean and surly face.

The woman who shot him had a strange, unworldly name: Valeria Solarnus. She was an ultra - Lesbian given to wearing men's clothes and smoking cigars before it became popular to do so. She seemed to be like a man trapped in a woman's body who had come to hate all men because she was jealous of them. She had even started a radical organization of her own, SCUM - the Society to Cut Up Men. She had published a manifesto in the Village voice. The Voice ran it, thinking it was a joke. It wasn't.

The bitterness of Anastasia Fast came to mind, a woman trapped in a man's body, and Paladin Lamb understood a bit better. He could not help but think: "Man, what a couple those two would make!" Maybe someday in the Heavens he could play matchmaker, and put the two of them together. A new Adam and Eve! What a race they could sire! If only they could figure out who would put what into who.

It might be fun watching them play around with that. Well, once he becomes a full - fledged God, maybe he'd set that up. Could be kinda cute.

Then, he thought, how much of our world is due to the fact that our own version of God has a sense of humor? Maybe She's a bit kinky, too. Imagine God in a black leather dress? With black high heels, of course. And a platinum blonde wig.

The newspaper story wandered on to describe how Andy Warhol's family of friends were gathered 'round the hospital, keeping vigil, all dressed in hippie garb. Paladin felt like writing to the reporter and saying: "What did you expect, a bunch of suits?"

The story concluded with a pastoral vision of paintings of Campbell Soup cans and artists making a lot of money.

The pancakes and bacon arrived. The Cowboy's hand poured golden syrup over rich brown pancakes.

The waitress poured a cup of black coffee from a silver pot. The smell was invigorating, like a shot of energy.

The thought flooded in that his pancakes and bacon were really great art. After you finished looking at them, you could eat them. Sight, smell, taste and touch. Four out of five senses. Not bad. Music in the radio in the background. That makes five senses. Now to find a meal that could also appeal to the sixth sense as well.

“Oh, Wow!” thought Paladin Lamb. It’s a good thing this mission will be over soon. I’m turning into another Cowboy Bob!”

He cut a bit of pancake, and then a bit of bacon, too.

He was slowly but surely re - orienting himself to this earthly plane.

He looked up and saw his Lady Angel walking towards him. She was back in her favorite Betty Page wig. This morning she wore a crisp and immaculate white mini dress. She carried a shiny black leather purse. And, of course, her favorite white Go Go boots adorned her feet..

Her skin seemed to glow with the freshness of morning dew. It was probably Noxema.

“Hi, stranger. May I join you?”

“Have a seat.”

She sat down opposite him. There was an awkward silence, then, she spoke:

“Well, tonight is the big night, our main event. Soon , we’ll find out if the psychic forces we have set in motion in the dreams of our opponents work.”

“I wish that there was something else that we could do.”

“ Perhaps there is. Look, they have back - up plans. Well, so can we. If the Professor does stop their plan cold. We may have to act ourselves.”

“Then we’d be changing history ourselves.”

“Nonsense. We will just be taking the place of the back - up team that the Albino Alligator would have had in place, anyway. We’ll be preserving history as it was meant to be.”

“We’ll see. We’ll see.”

The crisp and efficient little waitress came by again, and Sonya ordered coffee, toast and jam. She left them alone.

They sat in silence while seconds turned to hours. Then Sonya looked around the room to see that no one was watching. She reached into her shiny black purse and quickly handed him a small metallic object. He took it and held it down to his side. The metal felt cold to the touch. He ran his finger over the cylinder of a revolver, then felt the trigger. He could tell it was a snub nose. Glancing around the room like a cornered rat, he put the piece in the pocket of his pants.

Then the waitress returned with the toast and jam and coffee. She served them with a shy smile, and quickly left.

Once she had gone, Sonya leaned over to him and said: “I have one, too. I’ll be there with you if we have to do it. This is our back - up plan.”

Silently, he took a sip of coffee. She took a bite of toast.

“Share part of your newspaper?” She asked.

“Sure.” he replied. He handed her the front page section. In a manly gesture, he kept the Sports for himself.

For a moment, they ate and read in silence, the perfect portrait of marriage in Middle America.

Then she laughed.

“What’s funny?”

“There is an article about Afghanistan. The Afghan King has just granted his subjects a

New Constitution. Their Parliament is debating whether to legalize political parties. They have moved from the middle ages into the twentieth century. The Russians and the Americans are plying them with cash to gain influence. The story says the whole place is as peaceful as the timeless camel bells you hear on the streets. The photos in the paper show a quaint and timeless mountain wilderness they say is just like Tibet. So peaceful contrasted to Viet Nam, or so the story says.

Paladin Lamb, controlling the Cowboy's every move, smiled a sort of silly grin: "Boy, they sure don't know what's coming up there in a few years. Soon, it will be more like a lake of fire and brimstone."

"And someday, California will be the New Tibet. An Hispanic Tibet at that." She smiled, enigmatically, and ate some more of her toast.

Again, there a silence grew around them. This time, it was his turn to laugh.

"What's funny?" She said.

"Bill Gadsby." He said.

"Bill Who? Oh, you mean the computer guy?"

"That was Bill Gates. No, he came years later. Bill Gadsby was a seasoned N.H.L. hockey player. The Detroit Red Wings have hired him as their coach. But they do not have a contract. That way, as the club puts it, if either party is unhappy, they just go their way."

"What's funny about that? In my times, people often work on a handshake. If there are any problems, they go to the government mediators and let them decide what is just and fair. We seek a just price. After all, no one would want to enforce an unfair contract anyway. It just isn't done!"

"Boy, that must be some world you live in."

"You have had a glimpse of it."

"It is like a mirror, just the opposite, of the nasty nineties I've just lived through. It seems hard to believe that such a world may yet come to be."

Silence came over them again. They sat in silence, lost in two solitudes, like the very portrait of Middle America.

Suddenly, Sonya kicked him in the shins to get his attention, and motioned with her eyes. His glance followed hers across the room.

At the far end of the dining room, in a darkened corner, Tanya the Terrible sat down with an odd yet familiar looking young man. He was young, crew cut, and wore a dark gold turtleneck, black slacks, and shiny black shoes. He looked like a traditional civil servant trying, uncomfortably, to adopt a mad look.

Tanya wore a white dress with dark blue polka dots, and, of course, she wore her trusty rust red boots. The outfit gave her a healthy, rustic look, like a clean - cut farm girl from somewhere in the mid west.

"Don't they just look like the PURRFECT Ken and Barbie doll set!" purred Sonya. "The soul of the silent majority, just empty dolls, that's all."

"They make a nice couple."

"You know, Paladin, I like the dreams of this age. I really don't want Richard Nixon and his silent majority to win this next election."

Paladin Lamb's voice was grim as he said: "Like the song says, 'Keep your eyes on the prize!'"

In the distance they saw Tanya take a small black object from her purse and quickly hand

it to her companion. He put it in his pocket.

Sonya whispered: "I think we've just had a glimpse of their back - up system."

"Let's hope it works out that way. Neither of us wants to kill Robert Kennedy."

"Still, we have our duty to save history." She sighed heavily.

He glanced back at the newspaper sections that lay on their table. He said:

"There's a story in there about some South Vietnamese big wigs being killed by rockets from a U.S. Helicopter."

"Friendly fire?"

He breathed deeply and sighed: "Maybe that's what we will have to be. 'Friendly Fire.'"

Chapter 23: Strange Seashore

That night the astral forms of Sonya Savage and Paladin Lamb held hands and drifted among the stars of another dimension, perhaps for the last time. They felt sorrow at the nearing of the ending of their mission, but they were determined to do whatever might remain to be done to see it through.

Their earthly bodies were asleep in a rented car near the headquarters of the Kennedy campaign, ready to be awakened if needed. They could scout more easily in Astral form. Soon, they would enter the hotel where Kennedy was staying.

Briefly, they were at peace in their own starry firmament.

Suddenly, as if by magic, the scene changed. Now, they were walking along a golden sanded beach, holding hands like two young lovers. An inner voice told both of them that they had traveled a great distance together. They stood by the edge of a great ocean. They looked out across a vast expanse of rippling water painted gold by what was either a setting sun or a rising one. You could not tell which it was.

For a few seconds, Sonya stood stock still. Her eyes were far, far away, as if looking over the horizon. Paladin could sense tension in her. She seemed to be listening to something. Then she relaxed. She turned to Paladin, smiling sadly.

“My voices...have spoken.”

Paladin was still amazed that even on this higher astral plane in which they now traveled, his Companion could still hear voices. But, as she said, on the plane of thought, all things are possible. She said her voices came from yet a higher plane. Could those upon that higher plane hear voices from an even higher one? That sort of thing could go on into infinity, like opposite mirrors eternally echoing each other forever. The thought gave him an eerie feeling.

Sonya said: “Our time together will be over soon. Our work is done. But we are to be given to see what will become of the seeds that we have sown on this mission.”

“We can only hope that our work is done. It isn’t over yet.” said Paladin through his thoughts to her.

“In your days, people are just beginning to experience the Cosmic Sense. They are overwhelmed by it. In our day, some of us have learned to use that sense just as we use our other senses, senses such as sight and sound. Because of that, I can show you a vision of what is about to happen as we leave these times. Behold what will come of it all, as the river of time flows ever onward.”

They were enveloped in a silver and blue mist that smelled like peppermint. Then, with the speed of thought, they were whisked away to another place.

It was a strange room, dark brown wooden walls lit by yellowed lights. There was a teak desk and a dark green couch, like the stereotypical office of a clinical psychologist. Wearing a shiny turquoise blue silk dress covered with pink flowers, Professor Paul lay on the couch, arms and legs all bound up together with leather straps. He was totally immobilized.

Tanya the Terrible entered the room, still dressed in her dark blue polka dot dress and her trusty rusty red boots. She always had such a clean cut girl - next - door look about her! But now, she wore the big twisted nose, as a sort of badge of authority, and also as a disguise.

The Professor looked up at her, and said: “Where are your leather clothes, my lady? We do not have long to get this photo session done. Then we have our greater work ahead.”

“There isn’t going to be any photo session, baby. We’re on to you.”

“On to me?”

“I do not know why, but, in some mysterious way, you are going to betray your own assassination plot. But we are not going to let you stop it. There is too much at stake.” She stood up straight with a haughty air to her and added: “The Albino Alligator is as unstoppable as

the Wehrmacht once seemed to be, as you, my tubby little traitor are going to find out. Still working for your old friends in the CIA? Or is it the FBI? No matter, we have friends in both."

"H - How did you find out?"

"My Guardian Angel told me."

"Tanya? That's crazy talk. Have you been hitting acid again? Tanya?"

His voice was getting nervous now.

In a haughty voice she exclaimed: "Speak to me no longer. I have found the perfect murder weapon. They'll never guess, even though it may be right under their noses. And so they will put your untimely death down to a heart attack."

She slapped her behind.

"Now I will just sit on your face and smother you to death with my beautiful behind. You will breathe your last breath into me."

"Man, what a way to go!" said the Good Professor. Those were to be his last words.

She walked over and stood above him. She hitched up her dress, revealing shiny undies with old glory on the seat.

"Behold the instrument of your destruction!" She said.

With that, she sat in his face.

There came a muffled sound.

She said: "My dear Professor, this time you will not talk your way out of it."

Fifteen muffled minutes later, it was over.

She got up and felt his pulse.

"Sleep tight, my silver haired co - star. Sleep tight tonight and sleep forever."

With that, she left the room.

Again the swirling silver cloud enveloped our two ghostly watchers, and swept them along with it.

They emerged into what appeared to be a crowded hotel lobby. Tanya the Terrible, looking sweet and innocent in her blue polka dot dress and rusty red boots, stood beside the little Arab who they had seen dressed up in a black Bosnian Waffen SS uniform some days earlier. She still wore her big nose disguise. They almost didn't recognize him either, without the fez.

She leaned over to him and whispered something to him. He smiled grimly, and nodded.

"She's pulling the trigger." said Sonya. "It will soon be over."

"History will still happen as it was meant to unfold." Said Paladin Lamb, sadly.

"With one difference. Professor Paul will no longer be involved, after all he did try to stop it. Thus, the Anastasia Fast of the future will be freed from her cross sex curse."

"Nicely done, do - gooder."

"At NICE, we like to live up to our name."

Tanya vanished into the crowd. The small dark Arab boy walked slowly in a different direction.

All around, there were banners and balloons and TV monitors. Then there were cheers and more cheers as people announced the results of the California primary, Senator Kennedy had won it big. And on the TV monitors, Senator Kennedy was smiling and waving and predicting victory at the Democratic National Convention.: "On to Chicago."

With those words, he left.

Suddenly a voice came from the TV monitor: "He's been shot. Oh, my God, Senator Kennedy has been shot. Another Kennedy has been shot."

They saw Tanya and her strange friend in the gold turtleneck from the morning rushing away from the crowd. They heard her say to her partner, under her breath: "We finally got him." Then they disappeared down a stairwell.

Paladin Lamb sighed mentally: "Well, that makes it official. At least we will not have to

intervene physically in all this. I hate to play God.”

The silver blue cloud came, and swept our two untimely witnesses away. As they floated, surrounded by that cloud, Paladin Lamb wondered aloud: “And what of Tanya? What about the girl in the blue polka dot dress?”

Sonya answered him: “I think I may have sown the seeds of fate for her. Let’s go see.”

They emerged from their silver cloud to float above another scene. They were above what seemed to be a muddy pit, containing several large rocks. The sun shone brightly, and was reflected from the rocks. Above, the sky was clear and almost cloudless blue. There were walkways beside the pit, as if they were in some sort of Zoo. A group was standing on that walkway, several people, and there were movie cameras there as well.

The astral travelers, unseen, drifted in for a closer look.

They saw Tanya, held by Toni Tulips and the Swamp Rat., both wearing their green and mossy ring garb as street clothes, just like they always did. Tanya was barefoot now, and wore only the blue polka dot dress. Her eyes were both blackened, like the woman in her dream. Her hair was disheveled. Her forehead was bleeding. Lilly Limone stood beside them, looking officious in a black mini skirt and a white blouse...and wearing Tanya’s famous rust red boots. They could hear her words as she spoke: “Well, Tanya, what have you got to say now?”

“Gimme my boots back.”

“Why? Are they magic boots? I do feel empowered wearing them. So that’s your secret, my dearie? And here I thought you hypnotized me. Well, well, my sweetie, whatever you did to me, I am not under your control now. What shall we do with you?

You always wanted to be a movie star. Now I have seen one of the movies we made together. You weren’t very nice to me, were you.”

“I’ll bet you enjoyed every minute of it .” snarled Tanya, defiantly.

Lilly put her fist in Tanya’s face. She wore several biker fighting rings of opals set in sharp steel. There was fresh blood on her fist. Tanya cringed.

“I hear you White Russians don’t like opals. So nice of you to kiss these ones.”

Tanya sounded almost delirious : “Gimme my boots back! Please.”

“You forget who’s wearing the boots now, baby. Well, you are going to star in another movie. We’re going to make a snuff film.”

Tanya gasped, involuntarily.

Lilly smiled, sweetly, as she said, softly: “I know some Texas billionaires who pay a lot of money for that sort of thing. Your finest performance will be enjoyed by some of the richest men in America. You always wanted to be seen by the rich and famous. Now you’ll get your wish.”

She snapped her fingers and twitched her nose like the star of Bewitched.

“Let’s get on with it.”

With that, the Swamp Rat threw Tanya into the open pit.

Down in the pit, she got up slowly, and looked around like a frightened animal. Above her, the cameras rolled.

A great white rock began to move.

Tanya the Terrible ran in terror.

She tripped over a mottled white and green rock. It, too, began to move.

“Eeeee!” She screamed. “It really exists! The Albino Alligator really exists. And I thought it was just a myth...”

Tanya backed away from the moving rock nearest to her. From out of nowhere, somewhere behind her, a white rock moved like living lightning, and caught her right leg. Her scream cut the air like a knife.

Then it was dinner time.

“Please, let’s go. I’ve seen enough.” said Paladin Lamb.

“I’d better call a cab.” said Sonya Savage, sweetly.

The silver blue cloud appeared from nowhere and swept them away from the scene of death and decay, and took them far, far away.

Again, the ghostly time travelers stood together, beside the glistening gold waters that lay between night and day. They looked out at the gently rippling waters of their mystic lake.

Sonya smiled sweetly as she spoke: “Tanya’s triumph did not last long. You see, I changed Lilly Limone’s programming so that she would remember everything that Tanya made her do while under hypnosis. The trigger that I put in her program was the death of Senator Kennedy, so that when he died, she remembered. So, in spite of her witchy ways, Lilly became an instrument of Divine Justice. And so, indeed, the girl in the polka dot dress disappeared into the bowels of the Great Beast, the Albino Alligator.”

“Well, she had it coming, but I somehow, I still feel sorry for her.”

“It’s just like with President Kennedy. Most of those involved in the conspiracy died violent deaths, often killed by others involved in the plot in an effort to cover their own tracks. The Albino Alligator could never leave someone like the girl in the polka dot dress around to tell tales. Only the Great Beast of America lives on, the Albino Alligator, a strange monster that devours its own children.!”

Sonya took him by the arms and looked him in the eyes, and said:

“ So our mission in this back time now has ended, and we are soon to part. We came from different times, and so it may be said that our little love affair was truly star crossed. But all will not be lost.”

“ I will feel loss, almost like a deathly parting. We will soon go on our separate ways, Sonya. I will miss you more than I have ever missed anyone, for we have known each other on so many planes of existence.”

“Do not despair, Paladin Lamb. There are currents in the river of time. Our love has placed us in the self-same current, so I know we’ll meet again, even if it takes ten thousand years.”

The two astral forms embraced. Briefly, they became a Bright Blue Star of Love. Somewhere a sixties song was heard: “We’ve got to get ourselves back to the Garden.”

END